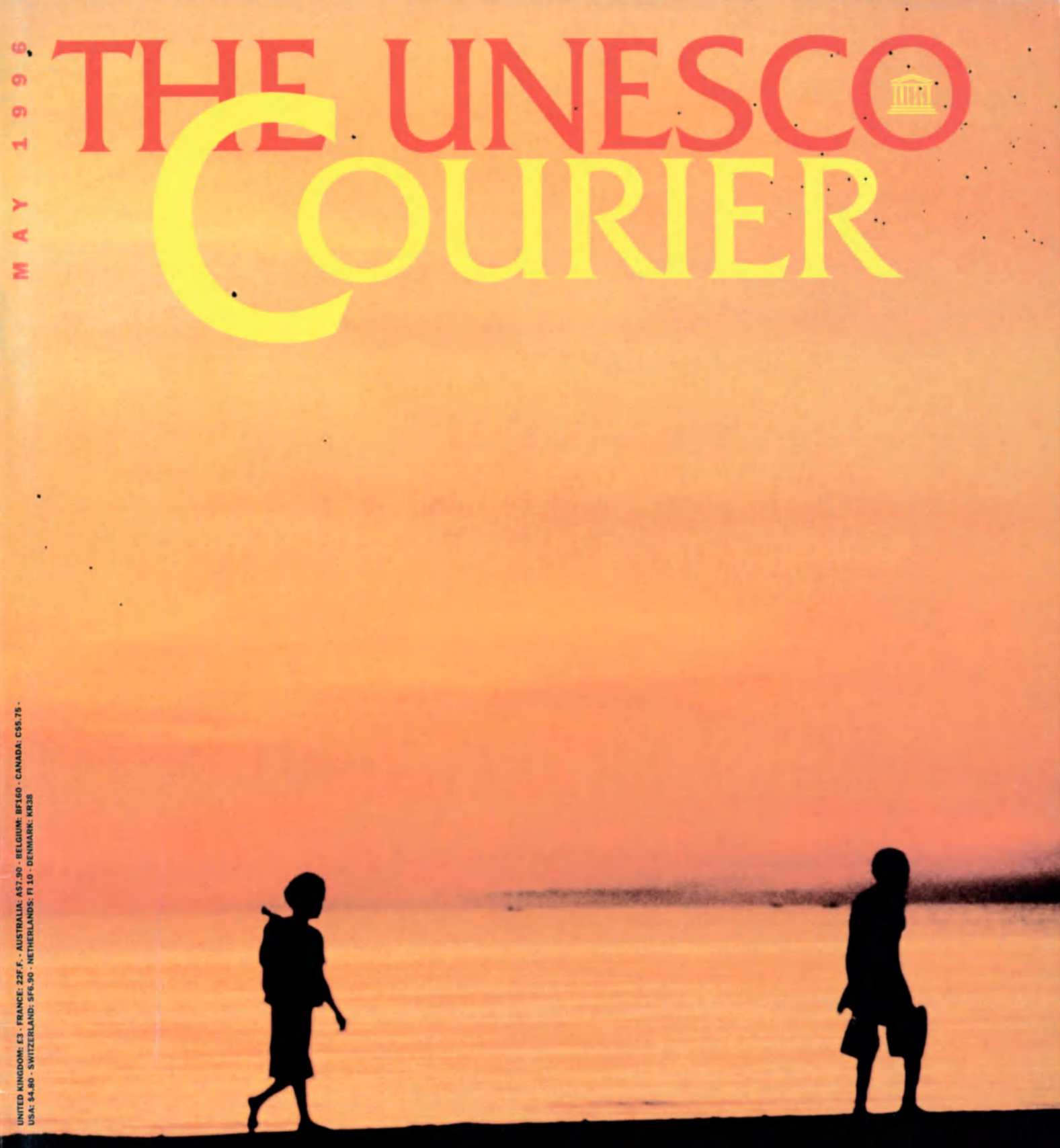
MAY 1996

THE UNESCO COURIER



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CORRUPTION

INTERVIEW WITH ISMAIL SERAGELDIN

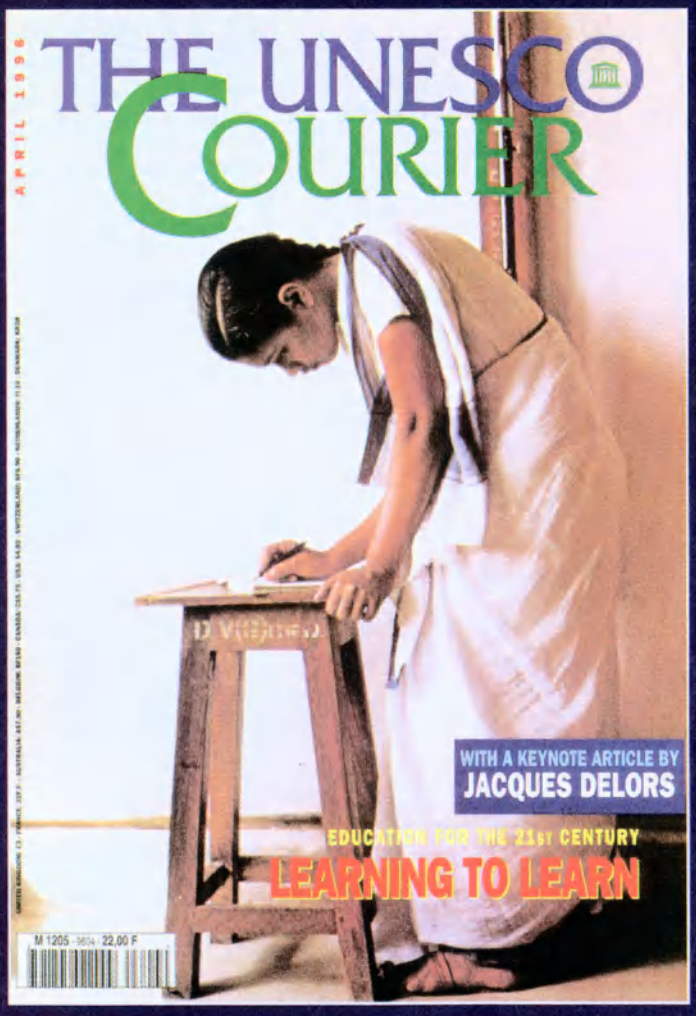
VICE-PRESIDENT AT THE WORLD BANK

HERITAGE

THE MONASTERY OF RILA (BULGARIA)

ENVIRONMENT

LIVING ON WATER



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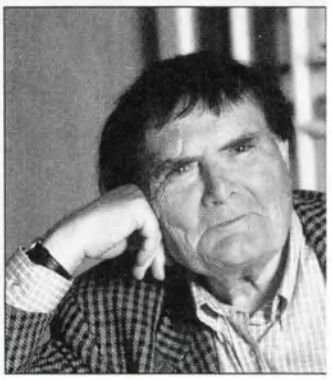

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Cover: Sunset in the Philippines.
Valdin © Diaf, Paris

Hervé Bazin

'I write to warn. . .'

The French writer Hervé Bazin, who died in February at the age of 84, made his reputation with the virulent attacks on the institutions of family and motherhood contained in his autobiographical novel *Vipère au poing* (1948; *Viper in the Fist*, 1951). His later novels on social themes and psychological conflict won him a wide popular readership and a number of literary prizes in France and elsewhere. Among his best-known novels are *Qui j'ose aimer* (1956; *A Tribe of Women*), *Madame Ex* (1975; "Madame X") and, most recently, *Le neuvième jour* (1994; "The 9th Day"). Hervé Bazin gave this interview to the *UNESCO Courier* shortly before his death.

■ **Let's talk about your latest book, *Le neuvième jour*. . .**

Hervé Bazin: God created the world in six days. On the seventh he rested. On the eighth he expelled Adam and Eve from the earthly paradise. We are now living on the ninth day. We have entered the ninth era, the time when faustian man takes the place of the Creator. Human intelligence gives us access to various highly sophisticated forms of creation, which also have a strong potential for destruction. Humanity has the choice between happiness, which will never be absolute, and universal suicide.

■ **You write to warn, to keep the public on its toes. . . .**

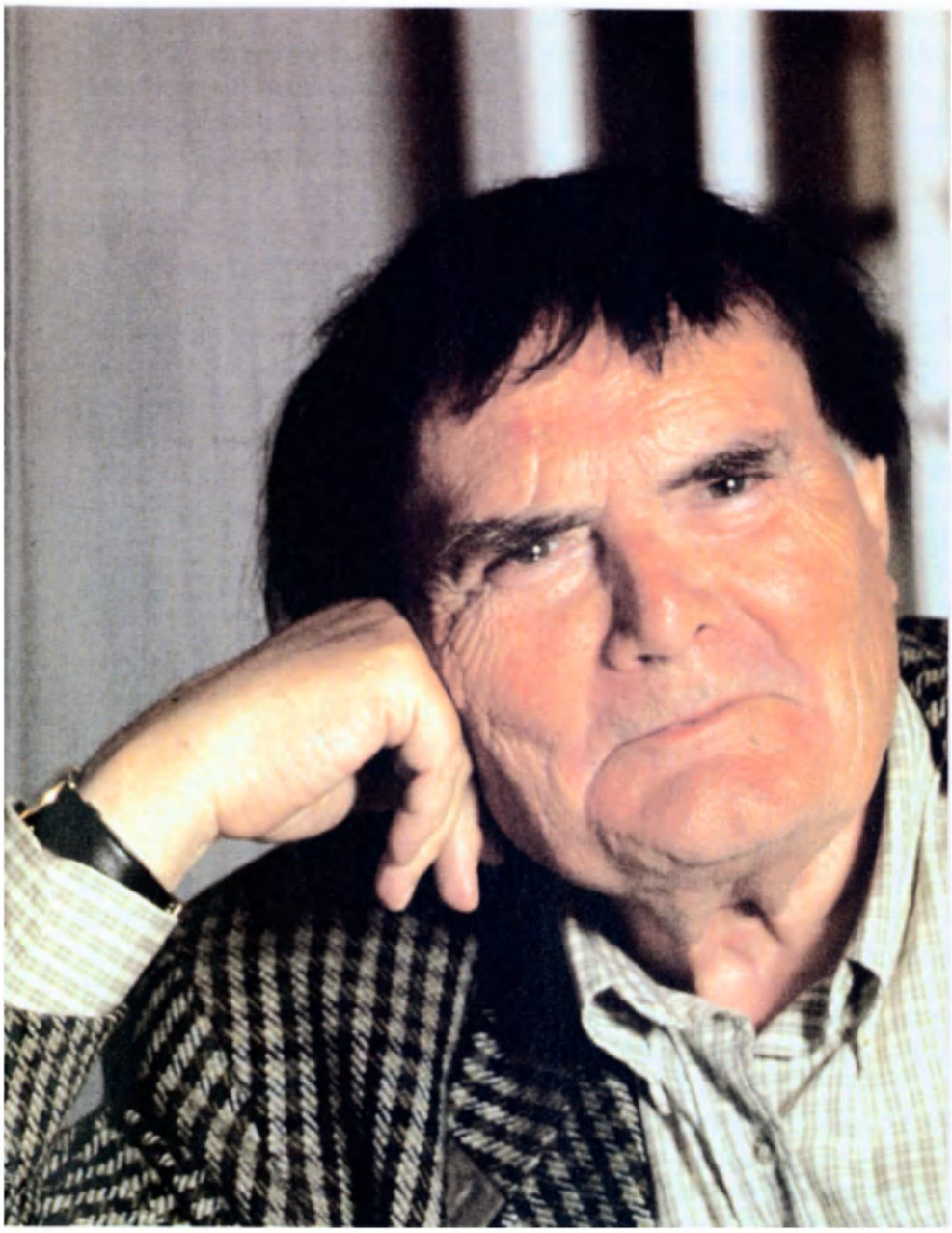
H.B.: My long experience in journalism has taught me a utilitarian approach to writing, an approach I would describe as committed and designed for direct communication. I have always been driven by the problems facing contemporary society. At the present time it is important to set them down in books because, given the speed of modern communication, there is a constant turnover of news; however important events are, new ones happen and push the earlier ones into limbo. People need permanent landmarks to help them put things in perspective, touchstones to help them distinguish between real threats and those that are simply passing fads.

Nuclear power is dangerous, for instance, and we shall have to live with it until the end of time—I mean that we must make sure the bomb is never used—but I don't think it is a major peril because it is closely monitored and small states are not in a position to manufacture atomic bombs. Biology is dangerous, however, because it is accessible to any lab assistant who can tinker with viruses.

■ **In *Le neuvième jour* you give fictional treatment to a scientific fact.**

H.B.: The subject I deal with in *Le neuvième jour* had been in my mind for a long time. The novel is more effective than the essay in bringing to a wide public a universe which is, alas, very real and not at all science fiction. In my novel I imagine a strain of influenza, a "superflu" far worse than the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918—on which known vaccines have no effect. To prevent a catastrophe, an all-purpose preventive vaccine has to be found very quickly. The main character, Monsieur Alleaume, discovers that it is possible to make such a vaccine. But of course that isn't the end of the story. A researcher may be motivated by a desire to benefit humanity, but we also have to reckon with competition between firms in the health business which—to quote from my novel—"would be very unhappy if they were beaten to the post and had to abandon their sacred profits to rival companies". And so my novel is a warning. Be careful! Man has taken the place of God. He is free to destroy himself and the earth with him, because he has equipped himself with the resources to change and invent all kinds of

Biology will only continue to be beneficial if it is closely monitored, like nuclear power.



S. Bassouls © Sygma, Paris

Hervé Bazin in 1994.

things. We don't know the precise origin of Aids, for example, but researchers know how to create the virus *in vitro*.

■ What forms can the 'biological peril' take?

H.B.: Today other methods of racial selection exist than those designed by Hitler. There may be some Fausts among the researchers who are working away in the shadows. The viruses they discover may become a form of currency, instruments of pressure and oppression, diabolical weapons. But the propagation of a virus can be deliberate or accidental. In 1978 in Birmingham, a researcher named Henry Bedson was working on the monkey smallpox virus, which was suspected of being transmissible to people. The virus infiltrated from the laboratory through an air duct with a defective filter to the next storey of the building, which was inhabited, and caused the death of two people. In despair, Bedson committed suicide. But people like to keep quiet about this kind of incident.

■ . . . Examples of man playing around with nature?

H.B.: Biologists know that nature uses the same chemical language for all living creatures whose genes are interchangeable. In other words, researchers can cross barriers. I picked out some funny but authentic examples from the animal, vegetable and human worlds. Biologists working on sap have done some astonishing things. There's no need to dye cotton jeans any more, for example. All you have to do is splice a gene from a blue flower into the cotton plant. One third of the vegetables and cereals grown today are transgenic—they have received additional genetic material to endow them with new characteristics. Scientists are licking their lips over all these possibilities.

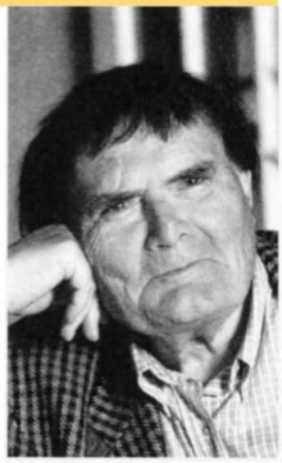
One of my friends, a plant research specialist, is trying to make luminous tobacco using genes from glow-worms. What on earth is the use of tobacco that is luminous at night? None at all, you might say. Well, think again. It proves the unity of life: animal and vegetable get on well together. By replacing one gene with another, you can make anything you like. Here's another amazing, crazy and diabolical example. There is an extremely useful medicine based on lactoferrin, a substance produced in very small quantities by women who breast-feed their children. The lactoferrin gene has been taken from a human being and transmitted to a bull that later inseminated fifty-odd cows that now produce masses of the stuff.

There are plenty of examples of this kind of thing. California is a big producer of strawberries. Unfortunately, strawberries are sensitive to frost. A late frost can ruin the whole crop. But now it's possible to prevent strawberries from freezing by introducing into them a gene from plaice, a fish that is resistant to cold. It's soon done! Just imagine! The Americans, whose regulations are extremely strict, rejected the idea out of hand. So the growers and researchers turned to countries where there is a more relaxed approach.

■ How does public opinion react? And the scientists, who have access to confidential reports? Do they veto this kind of thing?

H.B.: In Japan, public opinion is imposing

Hervé Bazin



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'I write to warn...'

a slowdown on this sort of way-out research. The same thing is happening in the United States. But the downside can lead to beneficial discoveries. How wonderful it would be if we could discover genes to combat cystic fibrosis! Biology will only continue to be beneficial if it is closely monitored, like nuclear power. The trouble is that it costs a fortune to make an atomic bomb, whereas it costs much less to start a laboratory. Mad scientists do exist. Firmini was a wise man. He discovered the disintegration of the atom and took his secret with him whereas Einstein made it known to the world. Myxomatosis is a classic example of this kind of thing. A researcher who lost his temper when his vegetable garden was destroyed by rabbits, and infected them with the disease, which he had discovered in his laboratory. Unfortunately, there was a hole in his garden fence and the two rabbits escaped and propagated the virus.

■ **Many people associate you with a chaotic rather than a peaceful world, an impression strengthened by your rebellious subjects and writings.**

H.B.: Rebellion is not totally negative. I had my say against the family in 1948 in my novel *Vipère au poing*, the story of my battle-axe of a mother. That book brought me success but it also scandalized many people. It was in a way my psychoanalyst's couch and also an act of revenge. With a start in life like mine, biting comes easy. Actually, it's quite healthy, and you start biting into other subjects. Later I became more self-detached. A story is a story, there's no need to go on and on. You change, you live your life, you have new experiences. And so I left hatred of the family behind me. I became a novelist instead of a memoir-writer. Characters were born in me.

After writing about the cruelty of family life, I turned to its joys in *La mort du petit cheval* (1950; "The Death of a Small Horse"). I have always been attracted by the world of outsiders, in this case the mentally ill, especially after the French newspaper *France-Soir* commissioned me to find out what was happening in the world of French psychiatry. This helped me to write about the psychology of the mentally ill in *La tête contre les murs* (1949; *Head Against the Wall*, 1952) and the psychology of a pyromaniac in *L'huile sur le feu* (1954). It is widely known that the pyromaniac is someone who wants to be a great purifier. The book is based on the true story of a fireman who started fires so that he could put them out. With this novel I really moved away from autobiography. In the sequestered world of madness I also discovered an administrative system that was adept at closing files when families wanted it to and was not above drugging patients to destroy the minimal mental faculties they had left. The mentally ill don't do anything to help to keep society's wheels turning and so they must be eliminated.

Eventually, however, I found peace thanks to the country life I wrote about in *Qui j'ose aimer* (1956) and *Chapeau bas* (1963). After three marriages, with children and grandchildren, I discovered loving fatherhood (*Au nom du fils*, 1961; *Le matrimoine*, 1967), in contrast to the delinquent motherhood I had described in my first novel. I also wrote about people who have to fight against the death of the body, and the mental repercussions of this, in novels such as *Lève-toi et marche* (1952; *Constance*, 1955), not forgetting the time, described in *Le démon de minuit* (1988), when in the evening of his days a man sees his approaching death almost like a spectator.

■ **You are particularly fond of one of your novels, *Les bienheureux de la désolation* (1970), which symbolizes the break between the peaceful world of the past and the modern, destructive world.**

H.B.: It's my greatest social novel. It is based on something that actually happened and that intrigued sociologists. About 250 people lived on the desolate island of Tristan da Cunha, in the south Atlantic. A volcanic eruption forced them to leave and take refuge in England, where they discovered the joys and sorrows of civilization. It made me think of the Indians and Eskimos and other indigenous peoples killed by so-called civilization. In the end, the islanders returned to their devastated island and recreated it, using technology to tame hostile nature, not harming it but not letting it get the better of them either. This is a lesson from the awkward squad, whose members range from the youthful rebels of May 1968 to eighty-year-old ecologists. These are the people who link the old world and the new.

This is an example of a civilization that refused to give up being itself, that preferred the quest for itself to wandering and exile. The people of Tristan da Cunha belong to a community that finds adventure on its own doorstep, and enjoys freedom, equality, solidarity and mutual help without competition or domination. A community where need keeps out luxury. There now! I almost feel that I'm making a politician's speech on the eve of an election! But we have to admit that those islanders actually did what we waste our time talking and writing about without making any contribution to human progress, since politicians look no further than their own navels, and our civilized and industrialized societies now have poverty knocking at their door.

■ **How do you write your books?**

H.B.: On an old typewriter, an ancient,

Writing is a social art.

noisy Underwood that requires fingers of steel. I just can't bring myself to use a word processor. I need the physical effort of writing. Ink gives shape to the informal, to mental processes. I can sit at my Underwood from seven in the morning until two o' clock the following morning with only short breaks for meals. Fictional characters are very possessive. Some of them are elusive and try to run off the page, while others are too demanding. When you write like that it's like boxing—and sculpture. When all's said and done, writing is a very physical activity.

■ **It's true that you don't give your readers a very easy time. You shake them up, you hector them, you never let them relax. Bazin is often synonymous with hardness and cruelty. Your pen is a scalpel.**

H.B.: As I told you, I like good clean bites. Our age is built on pretence. Everyone wears masks. Mine is described by something Sartre once said. "One writes to warn". Writers are angry witnesses. They are watchdogs who bite. But that doesn't stop me from being a member of several organizations that work to promote peace and save the planet. But writing isn't a gratuitous act. The French writer Georges Bernanos said, "God didn't put a pen in my hands for me to have fun". The aesthetics of writing and research for its own sake are not my thing. Writing is a social art. It is socially useful and looks at subjects via a witness called a character, who has to tell things in a lively, effective way. Writing is not a game; it is engraved in the memory. The world's best-sellers are the Bible and the Qur'an.

■ **The poet Rainer Maria Rilke, a man of great sensibility, said that writing is like 'rutting'.**

H.B.: Yes. It's also a way of breathing and to a certain degree, a drug. It's impossible to do without it. "It's divine", we say pretentiously. And in front of the blank page, we always feel stage-fright, panic. You say to yourself, "Is it going to come? Will the magic happen again?" Writing is always unpredictable. Like a page of life you live each day; you have a vague idea of what is going to follow on from yesterday's chapter, and then, suddenly, something turns up. And off you go!

Our age is built on pretence. Everyone wears masks. Mine is described by something Sartre once said: 'One writes to warn.'

When that happens you write for hours because you have to maintain contact: there's a prompter somewhere in the wings. We are not entirely responsible for what is happening. If, for example, at the start of a novel you describe one of your characters in a certain way, you don't change it later on. You can't do it. Rationality has nothing to do with it. It's more like metaphysics or even spiritualism.

■ **You are president of the Goncourt Academy, which awards a prestigious French literary prize every autumn. How does the selection process work?**

H.B.: Edmond Goncourt, who outlived his brother, welcomed innovative writers to his literary salon in his so-called *Grenier*, two rooms in his house at Auteuil. To perpetuate this practice he left his fortune to endow a literary academy—the Goncourt Academy. Awarding an annual prize is quite a job. I have to read about 150 books—no manuscripts. This means that my brain has to be an empty shell so as to be receptive to every sentence. When you've read fifty pages, you can already feel whether a writer has talent or is a mediocrity. So many people want to write! It's like a marathon: a thousand start, only fifty reach the finishing-line. And you can sense the writers with only one book in them and those who will cover several generations; the ones who will be a nine-days wonder and the ones who eventually will be read in schools; the ones with stamina and the ones with asthma.

One talks about authors in the same way as one talks about fine wines. I must confess that for some years there have been no fine vintages, no great years. The Goncourt Prize is not the national lottery. There is no favouritism, no vote cast for one of my publishers. But in order to stay impartial and neutral you really do need to be deaf and blind to pressure from the media. To return to the wine metaphor, it sometimes happens that we lose our nose for quality. The classic example of that was when Gallimard rejected the manuscript of Marcel Proust's novel! Talent is the most important thing the Goncourt jury is looking for—a traditional quality that needs to be brought back in many fields. Another important thing is a kind of spontaneity, so that the reader sees the pageant of events just as if he or she were looking at it out of the window.

■ **What does Hervé Bazin do when he isn't writing novels?**

H.B.: I love astronomy, and so does my eleven-year-old son Nicolas, my seventh reincarnation. He stargazes and plays the violin. Will he become a writer? Looking at the stars always makes me think of the creation of the world, and the planets make me dream about the time of chaos, when the inchoate universe was still nothing but a primeval soup of fire, gas and molten dust, with the inklings of the soul that would lodge in our cells. And I like to stay in contact with people and nature. To stop myself becoming a dry stick, I draw plans for my house, I potter about, I cut wood, I do masonry. Physical effort gives a writer balance. I garden, and in summer, with my wife, Odile, I tutor my son. Now that I've rediscovered my provincial roots in Angers, I cut down my trips to Paris; I take the train there and back the same day. I feel the Paris social and literary worlds are very artificial.

I'm over eighty, but as far as age goes I decided to stop my clock at forty. Forty is a nice compromise, a good point from which to look backwards and forwards. My mind and body are as alert as those of a forty-year-old. I must confess that for me nothingness doesn't exist. My recipe for living can be summed up in one word. It is absolute and it goes a long way: "Be!" ■

Interview by **MARTINE LECA**

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FIGHTING DESERT ADVANCE

On page 41 of your October 1995 issue ("The United Nations—Why it matters") you show a green area created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Keita (Niger) as part of a development project. I know of others in the area, especially in the Tahua distict.

This is a good opportunity to pay tribute to the FAO and all the other specialized UN agencies that are engaged in development projects. More work of this kind should be done to bring back a green environment to countries hit by desertification.

Abdou Tini Kano
Tibiri/Maradi
(Niger)

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Your November 1995 issue ("Peace, a new beginning") contained the text of the Universal Dcclaration of IIuman Rights proclaimed in 1948 by the United Nations.

Could we ask the UN to add to the title of this document the word "duties", since duties are described in it. As the 19th-century French theologian Lamennais once wrote, "Rights and duty are like palm trees, which bear no fruit if they do not grow near each other".

Evelyne Chapeau Woodrow
Le Verdut/Saint-Brice
(France)

THE NOTION OF 'RACE'

Your March 1996 issue ("The roots of racism") insists that human "races" do not exist and that humanity cannot be classified in such terms.

I was all the more surprised, therefore, to see that the notion of race appears in your back cover subscription advertisement: "3. [The Courier] associates its readers with Unesco's mission of furthering 'universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms . . . without distinction of *race* (my italics), sex, language or religion. . . .'"

Vincent Nicolas
Conflans-Sainte-Honorine
(France)

This quotation containing the word "race" is taken from the first article of Unesco's Constitution, which was adopted in London in 1945. The term—less criticized then than now—emphasized the universal desire for world peace extending to all human groups. Since then, use of the word "race", as you correctly point out, has become more debatable. Editor

TOO CLEVER BY HALF?

Congratulations on the articles by Federico Mayor and Edgar Morin in your November 1995 issue ("Peace, a new beginning").

Edgar Morin writes that the planet is in trouble. It might be useful to remember what the great Taoist philosopher, Chuang-tzu, said on this topic three hundred years before the Christian era: "Excessive intelligence creates disorder in the radiance of the moon and the sun, breaks up mountains, dries up rivers and upsets the seasons. These evils even go so far as to disturb the fearful worms and the tiny insects in their habits. What disorder does not the love of ingenuity bring to the universe?"

Patrice Théret
Singapore

A LINGUISTIC AID

As a teacher of Russian at the Higher Institute for Interpreters and Translators in Milan (Italy), I often use your magazine in my classes because of its cultural value and open-mindedness.

Adele Oldani
Milan
(Italy)

Month by month

In July 1967, the *Unesco Courier* published an issue entitled "Noise pollution". The contributors to it reported on what was then being done to halt the invasion of noise in the modern world and to mitigate its harmful effects on the human body and on society at large.

In that issue of the *Courier,* silence was perceived negatively, as the absence of noise.

But there is more to be said about silence than that. Rather than an absence, it can be a presence—in the self, in the world, in the sacred. It is closely associated with religious experience—asceticism is often achieved through silence—and with art—the poet's words speak out across silence, which is at the heart of painting and the fount of all music.

Contributors to the present issue bear witness, each in their own way, to the power of silence when it is the culmination of an inner journey or a bond with others.

Historian Christophe Wondji describes the importance of the spoken word of the traditional African chief, whom silence surrounds like a sacred halo, and ethnologist Myriam Smadja describes the secret harmony that a ritual of silent mourning creates between the living and the dead of West Africa's Tammariba people. Psychiatrist Miguel Benasayag, author of a first-hand account of torture in the gaols of the Argentine dictatorship, and film-maker Hervé Nisic, who has made a silent documentary about Sarajevo abandoned to martyrdom by a cynical world, suggest that there are some situations to which silence is the only dignified response.

Other contributors describe the role of silence in mystical rapture (flautist and musicologist Kudsi Erguner), in musical performance (concert pianist Elizabeth Sombart), in poetry (Claude Louis-Combet) and in painting (Kumi Sugai). Silence is felt with particular intensity when there is harmony between body and mind. For physiotherapist Jacques Castermane those who achieve this silence have learned a lesson in the art of living and the practice of peace.

BAHGAT ELNADI AND ADEL RIFAAT

Men of few words

interview with **Christophe Wondji**

The word of an African chief is the sacred fruit of a long and silent apprenticeship

■ **Africa attaches great importance to oral tradition. Is there such a thing as an 'African silence'?**

Christophe Wondji: There are several kinds of silence. The silence of the night and the silence of the forest contrast, for example, with the sound of tom-toms during festivities and merrymaking, and with the eloquence of the griots—musicians and folk-historians. There are also the profound silences that punctuate the utterances of wise men, such as those of Ogotommel, the old Dogon sage questioned by the French ethnologist Marcel Griaule.

Speech is an act. It comes from the depths of one's being. It is a form of commitment. That is why the head of a family or a village speaks only at the appropriate time and place. Words spoken by a chief can be divisive. They can wound and even kill. A chief is therefore very careful about deciding when he should speak. There is an Akan proverb which says that the spoken word is worth its weight in gold. In other words, it is comparable to the signs engraved on the little bronze statuettes that were once used in parts of West Africa as weights for weighing gold dust. The only way of access to this word is by going through successive stages of silence, which "weigh down the tongue".

A village chief in Botswana.

© Pratt-Pries/DIAF, Paris

■ **Who can receive the words of an elder?**

C. W.: A father chooses the quietest of his sons, the one least prone to lose his temper, the one said to be "like a grave", in that he takes in words but does not utter any. His attitude shows he is keen to learn: he remains in the company of "elders", but keeps silent in their presence, thus showing that he knows his place.

One day the father takes the son he has chosen to one side and says to him: "My son, I want to give you some fragments of the Great Word—the word that concerns the origins of our family. You shall reveal nothing, I am sure: your belly is deep."

A person whose belly is not deep—who immediately repeats what he has been told—is left out, because "everything comes out of him easily". If he is incapable of keeping his mouth shut when he is young, how will he be able to keep an important secret later on in life? It's easy to spot a man "with a light mouth". Just tell him something of no importance and make him swear to keep it to himself. If he boasts about it to the first person he meets—and during the heat of the day gossip circulates fast beneath the straw roofs—the blabbermouth is disgraced forever.

■ **How is the word passed on?**

C. W.: By keeping one's mouth shut and one's ears open. The young man lets the elder speak. The master expresses himself slowly, in a rather low voice. His speech is punctuated by long silences, so that his words can penetrate the younger man and become part of him.

The griot (village musician and historian) of a Guinean village with his grandson.

© Cordula Kropke, Hamburg

■ **Does the disciple make any comment while he is receiving his instruction?**

C. W.: He never interrupts the elder with untimely remarks. For many a long year he simply listens. And as a result of his patient listening, his spirit is elevated and gradually approaches the truth embodied by the master.

It is only when he feels he has understood a little that he starts asking questions, but he is in no hurry to do so. Until he has made the elder's words his own, he will be unable to use his knowledge properly. That moment will not come until he in turn is in charge of a family, a group of hunters or a whole village.

For some time now, educators have been striving to introduce new methods of "expression and communication" in Ivory Coast schools—following a Western fashion. The emphasis is on dialogue. "Put your point of view across," very young pupils are told. "Formulate your doubts

and your criticisms." It is easy to see why the pupils find it hard to adjust to a practice so totally alien to their tradition of respecting a master and a corpus of knowledge.

■ **Can the silent listening of a disciple be compared to that of a hunter lying in wait?**

C. W.: In a sense, yes. In Akan, silence is defined by the following expression: "Nothing can be heard from the deep forest." The young hunter holds his breath and remains motionless as he learns how to recognize animals by certain sounds they make—the growl of the leopard, its muffled tread, the flapping of an elephant's ears, the rustle of grass under an antelope's hooves. There is an attitude that corresponds to each animal, but also an appropriate way of shooting it. When faced with a leopard, a solitary and combative animal that is quick to scent danger, the hunter has to adopt a completely different strategy from the one he will use with an antelope, which is timid and guileless. The arrow has to hit the leopard first time, in the head or the heart, otherwise it is bound to get you.

In the same way, the head of a family or a village, or indeed an Ashanti king, has to resolve conflicts with a good deal of tact, and without being unfair to either party. Like the hunter lying in wait, he seems to be keeping out of it. His "cane carrier"[1] conducts the debate in his place. The chief's words concern each person and are addressed to all. They therefore need to be selected, or "sifted", by the cane carrier. They are full of unspoken thoughts, which are extremely important, and which the elders know how to decipher.

Bruno Barbey © Magnum, Paris

The chief, then, listens patiently without interfering. Used as he is to staying in the background, in an attitude of attentive observation, he has learnt how to fathom the human soul. He can see through masks and contradictions. When he intervenes it is to bring matters to a close—using only a few words. He is expected to take the right decision courageously. He, too, has to "aim accurately", in other words recognize the trouble-maker but not exclude him: "He who is wrong must not sleep outside."

■ **You're talking about words spoken in public. What about those spoken in private?**

Elephants in Chobe Natural Park (Botswana).

© Béatrice Petit, Brussels

Fulani leaders returning from a ceremony (Nigeria).

C. W.: A chief does not speak to all and sundry, at any time or in any place, except via his cane carrier. If a "well-intentioned" person comes to see him and makes indiscreet remarks about one of his collaborators, he will simply say "I heard, thank you", turn away and refuse to receive the person again. How can someone who divulges a secret be trusted? What's more, the informer surely casts doubt, by his very act, on the chief's discrimination. It is as if he were saying to him: "You don't know how to choose your associates." The chief knows full well that a slanderous remark actually seeks to destabilize his power.

The chief's authority resides above all in his ability to keep calm and control himself, a faculty which he has developed since his youth, and which enables him to maintain a certain distance from himself and curb his temper.

One day, the inhabitants of a Bété village who felt they had been aggressed by the chief's men came to insult them. When the chief appeared, they redoubled their insults, because the chief embodies the whole village. The chief first listened to their vociferations without uttering a word, then decreed: "You are within your rights"—and invited the malcontents to join him over a jug of *bangui* (palm wine). They all fell into an awkward silence, then ended up admitting: "We went too far."

The chief is responsible for war and for peace. He has to find words that soothe, not words that incite, for when he dies he will have to leave his children a vigorous, united and prosperous society. And for that he will have to answer to his ancestors. ■

CHRISTOPHE WONDJI
is head of the General and Regional Histories section of Unesco's Division of International Cultural Co-operation. His published works include *La côte ouest-africaine du Sénégal à la Côte d'Ivoire, Géographie, sociétés, histoire, 1500-1800* ("The West African Coast from Senegal to Côte d'Ivoire: Geography, Societies, History, 1500-1800", Paris, 1985).

Interview by **MYRIAM SMADJA**

1. The chief's spokesman, who also carries the chief's wooden cane, the symbol of his power. *Editor*

© Myriam Smadja, Paris

Between two worlds

by Myriam Smadja

In a silent ritual in black Africa the living communicate with the dead

MYRIAM SMADJA
is a French ethnologist specializing in the funerary and initiatory rites of the Temberma people of northern Togo. She is the author/director of a documentary film on the Temberma, entitled *Tibenti*.

Silence fills the Atakora valley on the nights when the Tammariba[1] celebrate a *tibenti*, a mourning ritual practised by the elders of the clan. All the elders come and sit in front of the dead man's *takienta*—his house, a small earth-built fortress with windowless walls flanked by two towers topped by granary-lofts with pointed roofs, out in the middle of the fields. In the moonlight the *takienta*, whose name means "that which guards" (the living), shows its real face—the gigantic face of the dead person, and through it, the face of the ancestor who founded it.

It is the dry season. Blowing off the desert, the harmattan brings clouds that blot out the stars. The clan members are motionless and silent, seeming to melt into their surroundings. Their ears are filled with the sound of the wind. "When an elder passes on, a violent wind gets up."

Why this long silence? "It is through silence that the living communicate with the dead.

Silence is the true word." In observing this silence, the clan makes contact not only with the breath of the recently deceased but with the breath of all the ancestors of his line, which goes back to Dinabaa, a mythical place from which came the first Tammariba and the first men.

The breath of the ancestors

When the moon rises, the breath of the dead elders leaves the tombs in the cemetery and makes for the houses, where each one of them has an altar. The silence of the clan calls to them and invites them to join the living. They too will take up position in front of the house and prepare to guide the recently dead clan member down the road to "the place where one goes".

But if "the night is on the side of the dead, as the day is on the side of the living", it also belongs to the real masters of the place, i.e. "those underground", who come in the guise of the wind. By day, these underground spirits are curled up in the roots of trees, in the depths of springs and under rocks. They coil up in the folds of the "Earth's thick skin", which is like the inside of the skin of the immense female python who is the mother of the Tammariba or "Kneaders of wet earth". The name the Tammariba give themselves thus refers both to their own origins and to that of their *takienta*, which they have shaped with the flesh of Earth irrigated by waters from underground.

Opposite page, at the end of the second day's mourning, villagers walk to the cemetery. Below, a chicken is sacrificed in front of a house in mourning. Below left, baobab trees.

© Myriam Smadja, Paris

© Charles Lenars, Paris

From earliest childhood, the Tammariba know that at nightfall they must lower their voices and lighten their step. In the evening the underground spirits, in the form of white mares, take possession of their territory—trees, rocks and the "beloved" marshlands. They hate the noise made by humans: the loudness of their voices, the stamping of their feet, the pounding of pestles and the smith's hammer. But they put up with this as long as they are forgotten at night, when the world returns to its primal state, "still beautiful, filled with silence", when all that can be be heard is the wind sweeping over the surface of the earth.

By keeping silent, the members of the clan

Silence is the casing of truth.

René Char (1907-1988), French poet

sharpen their hearing to a pitch comparable to that of the underground spirits and the dead. "Isn't hearing the last sense remaining in the grave?"

An inaudible call

At the moment when the "dogs themselves stop barking", a call seems to ring out. A man who has climbed unobtrusively onto the balcony has uttered the name of the deceased, the secret name of the master of the *takienta*, the name it was forbidden to call him in his lifetime. The call has not been addressed skywards, but simply murmured through a hole linking the upper part of the house with the lower floor. It was "whispered in a breath", or "muttered inaudibly in the throat".

But the silence has dug such a space in each of them—a space as broad as the surrounding plain—that the controlled voice of the Caller has sounded with the force of a horn.

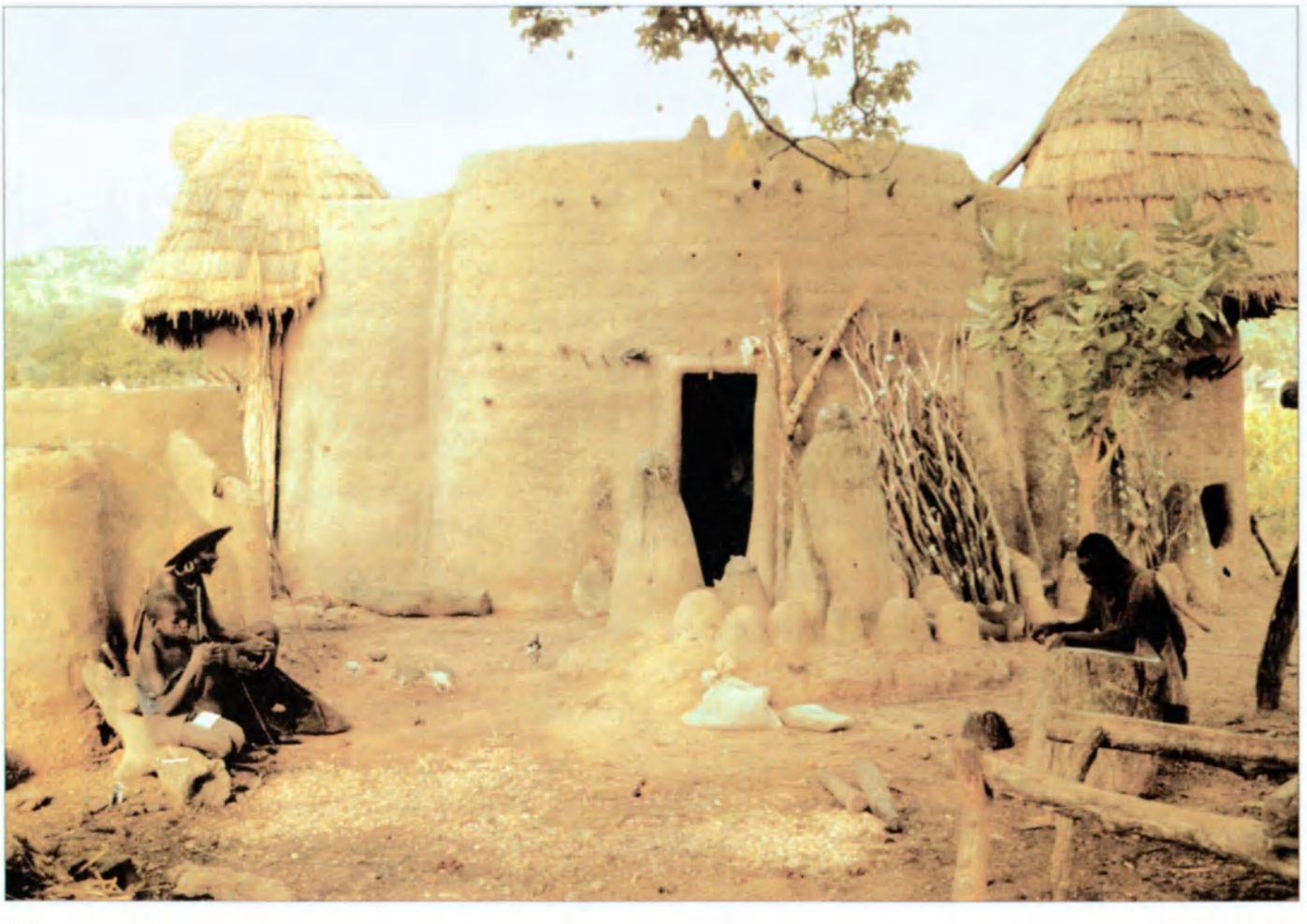
"At the sound of his name, the dead man's soul has jumped!" Drums and flutes begin to play. The breath, separated from the shadow, is now ready to live again in a child. The power of this call to the dead to bring forth a new life only exists because of the silence from which it draws support—a silence as vast as the night, swollen by the breath of the living massed before the *takienta*.

Among the Tammariba, silence is the pedestal on which the clan's solidarity is based. For each generation, this *tibenti* or collective listening before a house in mourning weaves unbreakable bonds between the members of the clan. The Tammariba avoid using "the language of daytime, which is kept for arguing and joking," to name that which is greater than they are—the mystery of death. That which, from death, again becomes life. Rather than betray, deform or make a mockery of this mystery, the Tammariba prefer to keep silent about it, knowing that "others, like themselves, have felt the same".

The Tammariba might echo Ludwig Wittgenstein's phrase: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent". ■

1. The Tammariba (singular Tammari) are hunters, herdsmen and farmers who live in the Atakora mountains and valley on each side of the frontier between Benin and Togo. They number around 100,000 and in Togo are more commonly known as Temberma and in Benin as Somba.

A typical fortress-like earthen house of the Tammariba people of Togo.



© Myriam Smadja, Paris

Fabrice Picard © Vu, Paris

Above and following page, *The gardens of Lucifer*, by photographer Fabrice Picard.

The last refuge

by Miguel Benasayag

What it means to be silent under torture

There are some things I cannot talk about; they are too painful for me and even remembering them overwhelms me. But at the same time they are like a scream that is locked in my throat and wants to come out; by staying pent up inside me it wounds me even more. Perhaps I shall be able to talk about these things, in one way or another.

To talk under torture is "to collaborate with the enemy". But how can you not talk, when they put you through the mill?

The footsteps come closer, ever closer. They touch me on the shoulder and whisper in my ear: "Let's go!" They help me to get up. Hell.... I take off all my clothes. They stretch me out on a metal bedstead covered with a thin foam mattress, fasten an electric wire to my toes, another around my penis, another around my fingers. At this moment, the torturers seem big and you end up by thinking that they know everything, that it is impossible to trick them.

You let it happen, what does it matter now whether torture, rape or killing is allowed or not? The time for words is over. There's no point in saying, "It's scandalous". It's not a scandal. It's something that exists. It's happening.

I catch myself thinking that it would be better if they were to kill me. Now I couldn't care less when one of them pretends to execute me. Why go on suffering?

This is the moment they are waiting for. But it is a moment that belongs to the victim. It is the victim who holds the key to the situation and decides whether to talk or not to talk.

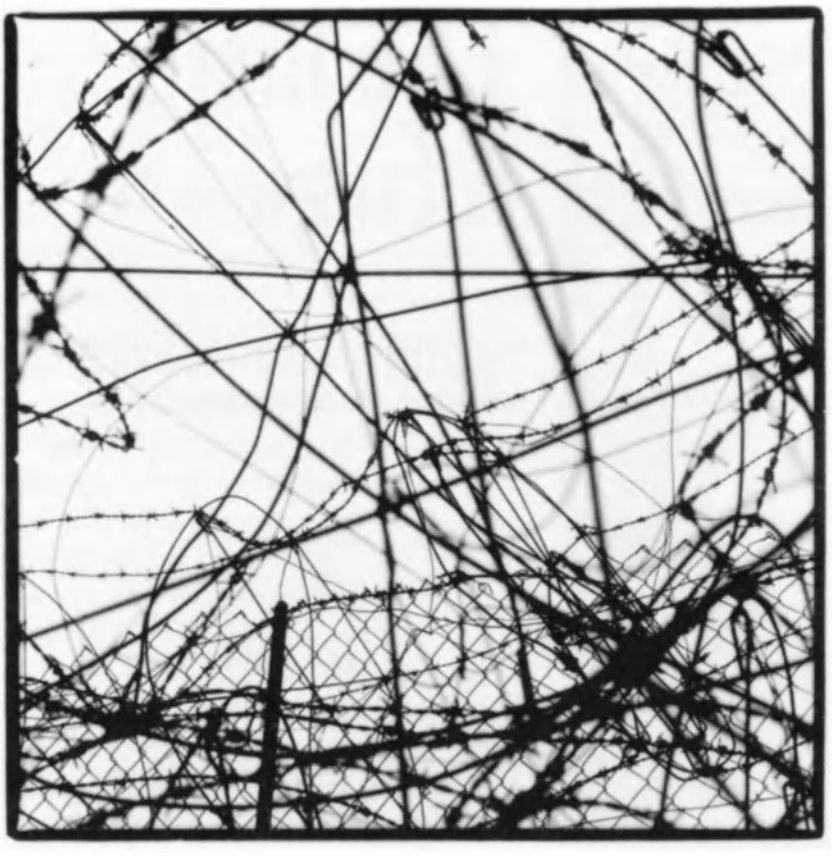
Why not talk?

Under torture, the idea of death seems to me the most natural thing in the world. I have lost the tragic sense that normally accompanies death. The moment arrives when they come to to kill us and when they find us prepared.

We can die under torture, without talking, to cover up for our comrades and brothers and also our political work which will survive us, but all that has nothing to do with heroism. We die because we have reached the point where death has ceased to matter.

We refuse to talk, because that is the only way of saving something of ourselves. Those who believe in heroic speeches are wrong—with the best will in the world. It's something much smaller, more mundane, more confused, more human and ultimately more beautiful—

MIGUEL BENASAYAG
is an Argentine psychiatrist who has published a number of essays, including *Penser la liberté: Le hasard et la décision* ("Thinking about Freedom: Chance and Decision", 1994). He has also written about his incarceration and torture in Argentinian jails in a book, *A pesar de todo* ("In Spite of Everything", 1982).



Fabrice Picard © Vu, Paris

Speech is the summary of silence—silence is the summary of all.

Roberto Juarroz (1925-1995), Argentine poet

giving a meaning to our life by giving a meaning to our imminent death.

. . . Behind the window, near the interphone, he was looking at his woman friend. It was visiting day at the prison. She recognized him. Deep in his eyes she again saw light, strength and love. Pedro had survived. He had not talked under torture; he could talk to her.

The point of no return

There is a time when a man can decide to be reduced to nothingness. He cracks up under torture. "I've had enough. I'll say and do all you want!" The point of no return is reached.

El Negro betrayed his own wife. He was crazy about her. Brought face to face with her in the torture chamber, he repeated his accusations against her. He wanted the torture to stop.

A man "who has talked" feels crushed, incredulous, a stranger to himself. Demolished. How and why should he go on living? He is no longer a man who could say to his wife: "I love you." To love someone you have to be someone yourself. By betraying others, he has betrayed himself. In his own eyes he has ceased to exist. By saving his life he has lost everything.

I remember El Negro as a shadow haunting the corridors of Resistencia prison. Trembling, bowed head. . . . A piece of flotsam. When he spoke he merely groaned. We tried to give him a little human warmth: he was not there, he was at grips with unbearable anguish. We all shared the chill that gripped El Negro. ■

Fabrice Picard © Vu, Paris

Faces of Sarajevo. Stills from Hervé Nisic's film *The Height of Silence* (1995).

The Height of Silence

interview with **Hervé Nisic**

The Height of Silence, a documentary filmed by Hervé Nisic in the beleaguered city of Sarajevo in 1995, consists entirely of 'silent interviews' in which men, women and children gaze at the camera. Here, Canadian journalist Hadani Ditmars asks Nisic about the meaning of silence in his film.

■ **What role does silence play in your film?**

Hervé Nisic: It is the whole essence of it. When I first went to Sarajevo during the war, I was struck by the fact that people were fed up with trying to explain to foreigners what was really happening there, the stories that were not told by the mass media. They also seemed to be fed up with listening to people promising help and then not following through.

Sarajevo had become a kind of no-man's-land of broken promises and inaction. Its people had reached a point where words were useless and meaningless, and were being used as a kind of phony communication, a point where it was better not to say anything. There was a feeling that "Everybody knows that the situation is bad, everybody's tried everything, let's just shut up about it."

Even if they thought that you might be honest and really wanted to help them, there was still a feeling of why bother? nothing will change. There will still be bloodshed and massacres no matter what we do. Things had reached that point in Sarajevo.

There was a feeling that I was just visiting people in a kind of prison, that I could go back home but that they had to stay there. As the "visitor" I could go away, but they had to stay there, under siege.

Somehow, silence felt like the only possible basis for real communication with the people of Sarajevo. But it was also a kind of test. I often felt that the people were asking me, with their eyes, "Are you really able to stand the way that I look at you? If you can do that, then perhaps I might talk to you afterwards."

All communication was through the eyes.

■ **So is silence a sign of despair or a sign of defiance in your film?**

H.N.: Silence is very ambiguous, and this is why I chose to use it as a means of communication in my film. I don't think there is a word in any language that can describe the situation in Bosnia. Silence is the only way of transmitting its complexity and the people's feelings. There is an immense dignity in the people of Sarajevo. You can see it. I am sure that anyone who looks at the images in my film will see how dignified those people are. Everything is contained in those images. Words don't add anything. You can't make any further comment on such images. Even as I'm talking now, what can I add? If you've seen those images, then you understand. There is no need for words.

■ **Does silence play a role in Bosnian tradition?**

H.N.: Silence has always been part of the way that you're welcomed. It's based on respect. When you go into a café, for example, if people have any interest in you, they will stare at you and stop talking. It can last for quite a while.

But this film is not about the Bosnians. It's a film about the relationship we Westerners have with Bosnia. It's a film that implicates the viewer. The silence of the Bosnians responds to the silence of the West in the face of the tragedy. It's a direct reaction to the impotence of the West, to its apparent inability to act, to its "false presence", and its official line—which is: "We are here, but we won't intervene, because we don't want to provoke things."

This official attitude carries in itself its own condemnation, and there is no better condemnation than silence. The Bosnian people don't want to be angry with us, with the West, with our governments. They want to keep their silence. I suppose that this silence is also a way for the Bosnians to say "We despise you." But at the same time the way that they look at us is full of hope. They are saying with their silence, "Look, here we are, we're human beings just like you, see what we are."

■ **So in a way, your film bears witness to the real situation in Bosnia.**

H.N.: Yes. The silence in my film was a way of bearing witness, but also of crying, of shouting, in a way that is so dignified that it denies any response or counter-attack. If someone shouts at you, it's easy just to shout back at them. If someone shouts at you silently, what can you do?

■ **Is silence, then, a kind of protection for the people in your film?**

H.N.: Yes. It's a kind of protection, but it's also a way of trying to make the other person think or reflect. It is as if the Bosnians were saying, "If I remain silent when I'm a victim, what do you

think of that?" The other person is forced into a position of reflection. It is also a way of provoking another level of understanding in the viewer. This became clear when I was making the film. I described my project to every person that I filmed. I told each one, "I want you to look at the camera as if you were looking at the people who were beyond the limits of Sarajevo—on the other side of the siege." The gaze of the Sarajevans was intended as a gaze that would pierce through the camera, through me who was filming, through the viewers on the other side—through time and space.

■ **Is it more difficult to twist silences than words?**

H.N.: We all know that, if you consider the amount of information that goes from one person to another, perhaps something like 10 per cent goes through actual words. Perhaps another 20 per cent goes through the way we express ourselves—through tone of voice, and so on. And the rest, that is to say most of the information, comes from the whole body. When we see or make films, we tend to think that dialogue says it all. It's not true. Dialogue says only 10 or 20 per cent of it. The rest is presence. The film underlines the power of non-verbal communication.

■ **But didn't people talk to you, in between your silent "interviews"?**

H.N.: Oh yes, sometimes it took me three or four hours just to get the right three-minute take. Sometimes, it took us that long just to get used to each other. The only rule was that there was only one shot, one frame, one take. So I had to wait for the right moment, when everybody had agreed on when and how we would do the take, when everybody felt comfortable. There is no artificial light in the film. Everything was filmed in a very natural way, to show the people as they are.

■ **In your shots of the landscape of Sarajevo, there is a sense that the ruined buildings and the barren fields are also keeping silent, as witnesses to a tragedy.**

H.N.: What I would say is that this kind of silence is really a basis for dialogue. I hope that my film will make people talk.

■ **What effect did it have on you to film the Sarajevan "gaze"?**

H.N.: It would have killed me if it were a weapon. I was hurt by those glances. But I was happy that they projected such strength. Usually the Bosnians are shown as victims in the media. And the more you see people as victims, the more you accept that they are treated as victims.

I was offered the opportunity to film people who had been wounded in the war, but I refused. I wanted to show the Bosnians as beautiful, strong people, not as victims or complainers. I didn't want to be a voyeur, either. By giving them the opportunity to be silent in front of the camera, I was giving them a chance to show their dignity and humanity. Using silence was the strongest way to do this. A film about silence became the only real means of communication. ■

HADANI DITMARS
is a Canadian writer and journalist who writes about issues related to intercultural dialogue.

A mystic journey

by Kudsi Erguner

A still from *Mevlevi* (1970), a film by Pierre-Marie Goulet about the dervish Muslim brotherhood, founded in the 13th century by the great mystic poet Jalâl ad-Dîn ar-Rûmî.

© Marisa Duhalde, Niépce Films

The Sufi musician draws his notes from a well of silence

Silence is the spring from which the Sufi musician draws his music. In that he is akin to the earth in labour. The musician does not know what will emerge, or when, but he cannot let the moment go by; he must be there when the seed sprouts.

Likewise, no one can know in advance what will come from the seed buried within them. Only the sound of the *ney*—a reed flute—can reveal the face of this other person who is one's real self. The sound of the *ney* re-opens in us a wound from a past time when we were totally at one with plants, stones, water and stars. The memory of this union vanishes at our birth. But when, in silence, we hear the first notes of the *ney*, memories rise up in us, and we remember this lost homeland.

"We have all heard this music in Paradise," wrote the thirteenth-century mystic poet Jalâl ad-Dîn ar-Rûmî. "Although the water and clay of our bodies have cast doubt over us, something of this music drifts back into our memory."

According to Islamic tradition, the *ney* has this power to command memory because "the reed quill was the first thing created by God". Like humankind, the *ney* was cut from its roots, the reed-bed by the pond's edge. "Ever since then," complains the *ney* in Rûmî's words, "my dirge makes men and women lament. I call to a heart torn by separation to show it the pain of desire."

The *ney* is thus man's double. Both have wounds on their chests and are enwrapped in bonds. Both are empty and desiccated because the earth no longer nourishes them. Each is voiceless without the other. The reed flute is made to sing; it only comes to life at the musician's lips. Hearing its notes, the musician glimpses the inaudible vibration of the celestial vault and remembers the time when he was wedded to its movements. The time when, unveiled, he contemplated the shining face of God. "We are the flute," sings Rûmî. "Our music comes from Thee."

The *sama* is the spiritual concert where the *ney* is accompanied by the *daf* (a frame-mounted drum), the *tanbur* (a long-necked lute), the *kanun* (zither), the *ud* (short lute) and the *kemence* (violin). It takes place in the evening in a *tekke* (a large room in half-light). The musicians, who are gathered on one side and surrounded by an audience on carpets and couches, only begin to play after several hours have elapsed, when a long silence has settled in.

Roland and Sabrina Michaud © Rapho, Paris

A dervish and his reed flute, the *ney*.

KUDSI ERGUNER
is a Turkish architect and musicologist who himself plays and teaches the *ney*. He founded the Mewlana Association in Paris (France) where he teaches the Sufi tradition and classical music. Among his many recordings is *The Turkish Ney* (Traditional Musics of Today Collection, Auvidis/Unesco, 1990).

Listening

Sama means "listening". During the *sama* the musicians play compositions from one of the modes (*maqam*) in the repertoire or improvise on this mode. Some *maqam* belong to a tradition that may go back to the fourteenth century. They vary little in their form and are well known to the audience. But they are never played or listened to twice in the same way.

Speech sows, silence reaps.

Persian proverb

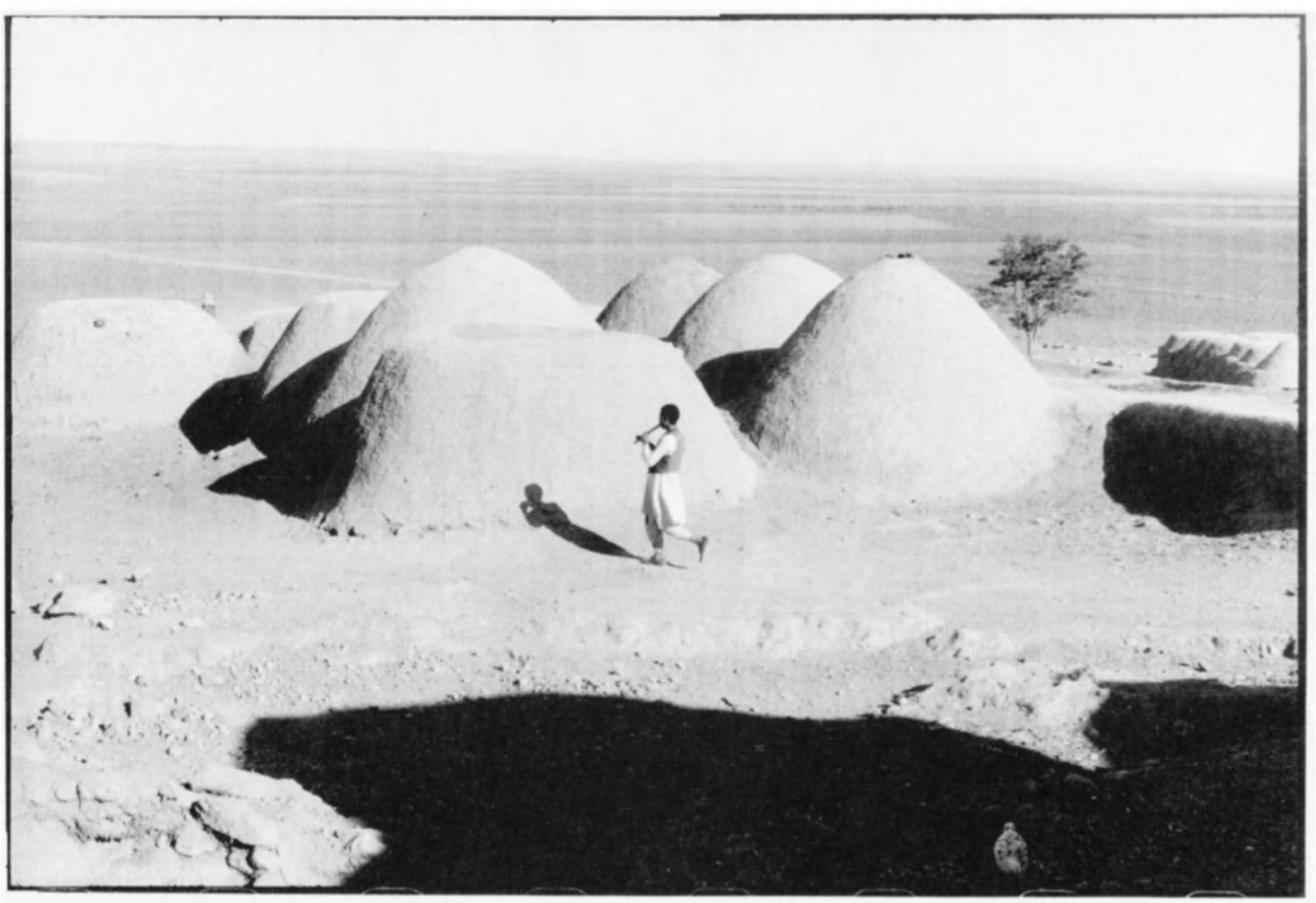
During a *sama*, the listeners are invited to embark on a journey of the soul. The route is spiral-shaped, and each stage of it is marked by a silence, as if wishing to test the solidity of the foothold reached before continuing the ascent. The musician, said Rûmî, provides the footprints. The *ney* player indicates a direction and creates a favourable environment for the journey. A specific atmosphere goes with each musical mode.

No one at the beginning of a *sama* can guess how the journey will end. Perhaps in a joyful meeting with the Beloved? Perhaps it will not be long, or the traveller will have to turn back. . . . Everything depends on the *hal* (state of mind) of the audience and the musician. But the two are so intertwined that it is impossible to know which influences which.

The word *hal* does not denote a vague feeling caused by a vagrant mood but the degree of elevation which a person with a "pure heart" achieves at the end of a period of inner asceticism. If he aspires to the divine, he must control his instincts without repressing them. The horseman who listens to his mount rather than guiding it has little chance of going far. In the same way, we must silence our inner sounds—our carnal passions—and concentrate our listening powers so that they become sharper and more watchful, sensitive to the slightest change of tone.

Sometimes the silence of the audience may be so complete that it feeds the silence from which the *ney* player draws the force and softness of his notes. At these moments the miracle of breathing becomes palpable for everyone, musician and listener alike. Inhaling and exhaling seem virtually automatic. In an almost unreal silence, the sound of the *ney* is a reminder that an instant of life is won with each breath. The musician's ear is schooled in the harmony of the celestial vault. By filling the reed's tube, his breath prolongs the continuous rhythm of the universe. He becomes the echo of its unending movement. ■

A flute player in a Turkish village.



© Henri Cartier-Bresson, Magnum, Paris

A concert pianist describes her innermost feelings when she plays in public

While playing, the inner self must be filled with silence.
Eve Arnold © Magnum, Paris

Music, time, eternity

by Elizabeth Sombart

I am eleven years old. I am about to walk on stage for my first concert. All is silence here in the wings, far from the hubbub in the hall as the audience arrives. I am overcome by a fear that I've never felt before. I walk on stage accompanied by the sound of my footsteps and those of the audience. Suddenly deep within me I feel I must return to the long silence offstage before I play my first note. How extraordinary that I need all these people in front of me to feel the absolute necessity for silence that is required before music can be played.

The truth dawns on me that noise is something that we merely hear. To experience music, we must listen to it, and to be able to listen, there must be an inner silence. Without this silence, there is no music. I must immediately forget the concert hall, the audience, the noise, the doors that open and close in the muffled velvet atmosphere. . . . I must hear only my own silence, the silence that lives deep in my heart. Breathe deeply. Breathing must make my fingers move. "Breathe the music and you will be inspired," our music teacher says.

The first note bursts from my fingers, my body, my soul, from the wonderful silence that fills me and uplifts me. How could I have been afraid? It is fear that makes us want to make noise; this evening I realize that noise is the sin of music. In music, the "frills" are what we project from our inner noise, from our fear of silence. My feet are firmly on the ground, my head is in the clouds and my hands fly over the keyboard. Every gesture that spells out music is "sacred". Sounds die out as I play, but no one notices that they are gone. They die without dying. They are absorbed in the body and soul of the listener and go on living there. The subtle music of inner silence. Music lives in all of us. The audience and I are now one, bound by this music that rises from my fingers like a meadow moved by silence.

A timeless moment

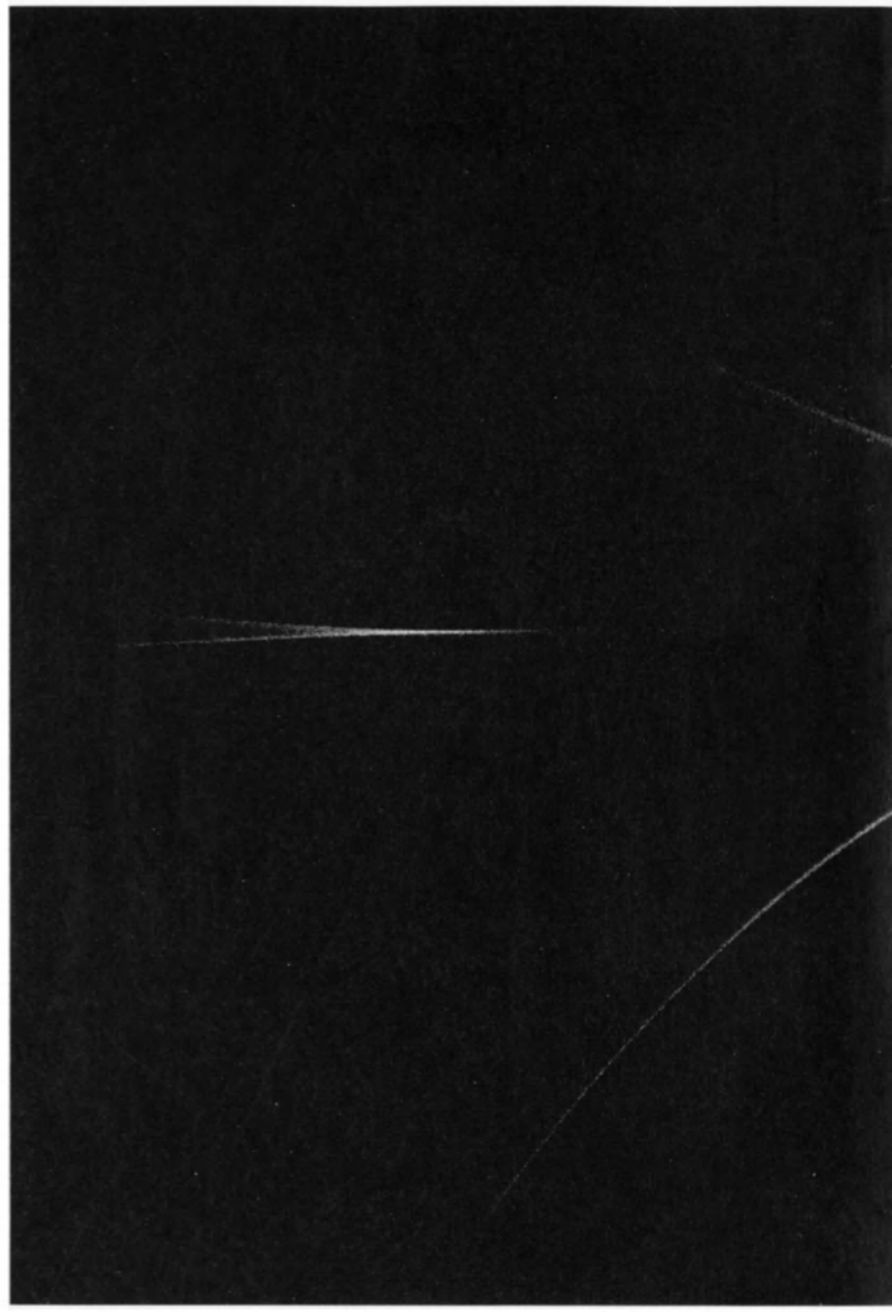
"You can't get to sleep?"

"Who are you? How do you know I can't sleep?"

"I am an old man who lives in the silence of eternity. Your concert this evening was very good."

"Did you think so? I don't know whether I played the music or whether the music played for me. . . ."

"It played neither for you nor for anyone in particular. It played, that's all. Music is the meeting place of the temporal and the timeless, the vertical and the horizontal. The meeting place is your heart, the seat of all the emotions expressed by music. This is how the universe advances in harmony with us. It is our heart, and our heart is the universe. A single soul, like yours, contains the feelings of all humanity."



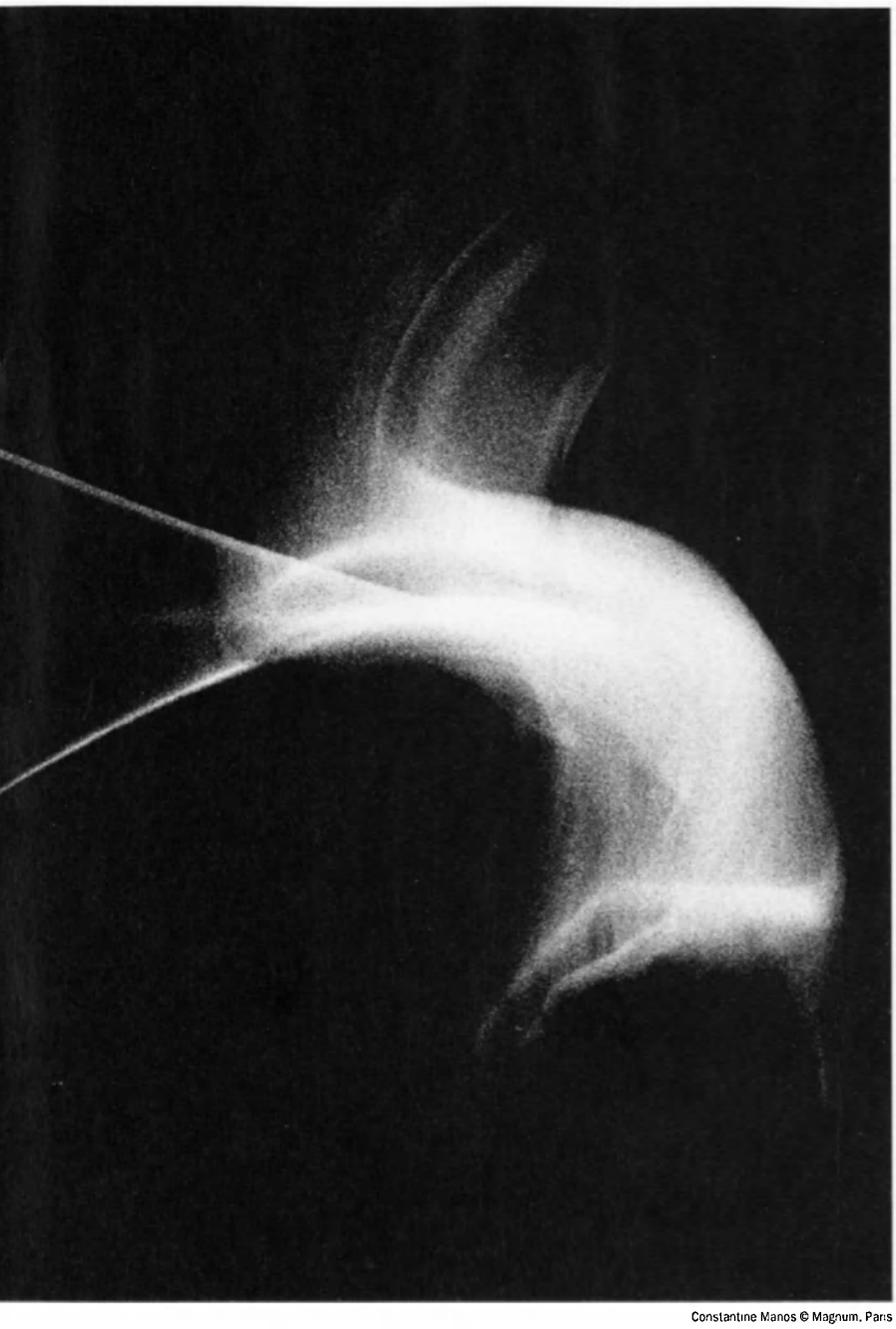
The hand of Charles Munch conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

"Eternity is in my heart?"

There is no one in my room except for my little teddy bear, who has been my night-time companion since I was born. I must have dreamed. I close my eyes again and drop off to sleep.

"Haven't you ever dreamed of music while you sleep?"

"You again! All I can tell you is that when I play, I do nothing else and I think of nothing else. If ever I think, I hit a wrong note. You know why? Wrong notes are noise. Noise comes from fear, the fear that distances us from the silence of music. And then we fall . . . you



Constantine Manos © Magnum, Paris

"Tell me again, where do the notes I play go to?"

"You send them back to where they come from: infinity."

"I'm not sure what you mean by infinity...."

"Every movement, every vibration, every true word you utter represents sounds that are in direct contact with the world, with the wavelengths of your heart. Like you, they have a past, a present, a future and a natural tendency to return to infinite silence. People think they die, but they do not die because time does not exist. Music is the metaphor of time and time is the metaphor of the Eternal."

"I don't know what a metaphor is. But I understand that these three words—music, time, eternal—are the same."

"How else would you describe the joy you spoke of earlier, when sounds mix and swell like a firework display in your heart, then scatter into a thousand emotions, fall away and fade into the silence of the night."

"It is love."

"Yes. Love is to music what silence is to infinity."

The old man disappears in a rustling of stars. I close the lid of the piano. The concert is over. I fall asleep. ■

ELIZABETH SOMBART
is a French concert pianist who is currently preparing a series of programmes for a French TV channel on the history of the piano from Bach to Bartók.

see? When we play well, when music plays through us, we lose track of time. Musical time isn't the same thing as ordinary time. Not at all! In musical time, there is no place for fear or for thinking. I feel such great joy and peace when I serve music, in this silence. . . . It is a timeless moment."

"When you began to play this evening, you did what all musicians should do: you took a vow of silence. Only then can each sound become a hymn to life, an explosion of unimaginable force that changes the course of events. Music was given to men and women so that they could understand, in the immediacy of this experience, that the present is the point where time touches eternity."

Silence is the absolute balance of body, mind and spirit—the ideal attitude and conduct of life.

Ohiyesa or Charles Alexander Eastman (1858-1939), Sioux Indian physician and author.

Painting the void

■ **Silence is central to your creative work as a painter. How would you define it?**

Kumi Sugai: As a state of inner emptiness and fullness, to which speed is an effective mode of access. When I drive my sports car at almost 200 kilometres an hour, my mind becomes extremely vigilant. I know that the slightest error could cost me my life. As I hurtle along in a straight line, I feel a sense of void and at the same time absolute joy. Suddenly I feel free and infinitely powerful.

In 1967 I had a very serious accident—I was nearly killed—with my first sports car, which was red. The one I've got now is white.

■ **It was around that time that you started painting red and black circles on a white background . . .**

K.S.: I draw them and paint them by hand, taking all the time I need for them to be perfectly formed. Alone in my studio, I rediscover the void that I experienced when driving my car at top speed.

■ **Working slowly in the studio, do you try to prolong the heightened experience you have on the road? Does the straight line of the road become on your canvas a spiral sucked in by a black hole, a kind of orbit of silence?**

K.S.: You could say that. I need two conditions to be able to paint: plenty of light and complete quietness. For me, the ideal studio would be four white walls, silence, isolation. Even if I accept that the sight and sounds of nature are beautiful, they do not inspire me. When I fly above the clouds in a plane I sometimes admire the colours of the sunset, but the sight does not give me a creative shock. What does, is the aircraft's landing on the runway, the speed of the car on the highway, or

© J. Hyde, Paris

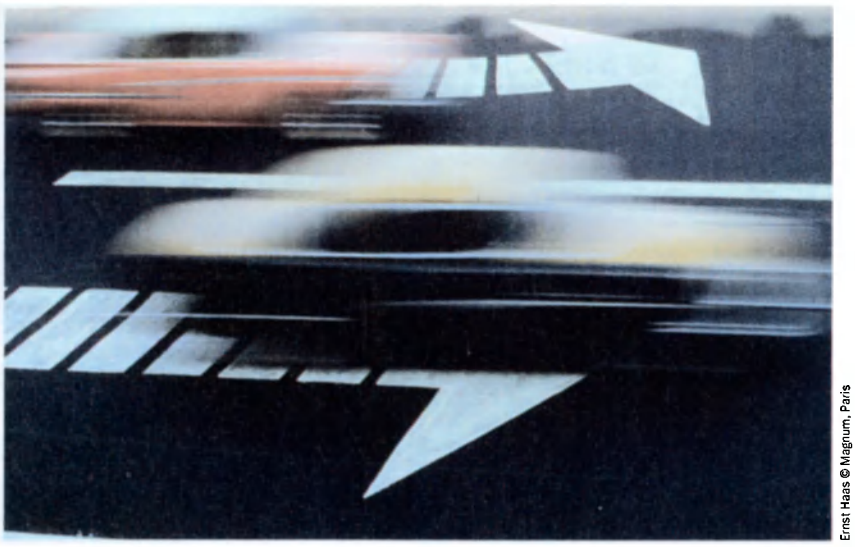
interview with **Kumi Sugai**

A Japanese painter who finds a creative shock in speed

the sight of any man-made perspective with pure lines—the architecture of the La Défense neighbourhood in Paris, for example. My friends say that being in my dream studio would soon drive anyone crazy. But I am sure that it is there, in that bare and silent space, that I could best express the inner void that inspires me.

■ Could you tell us what you try to express? Do you want to capture delirious states of mind, like Rimbaud, the delirium of an age taken over by speed? Or do you want to make contact with the 'other world', like a shaman?

K.S.: There are no words to define what I do. My paintings have something in common with road signs—which are in my opinion a model of immediate and total communication. On the highway, road signs transmit a clear message that any driver, irrespective of nationality or culture, can grasp



Ernst Haas © Magnum, Paris

Traffic, Mexico City (1963).

Top, *Espace 84* (1984, 202 x 689 cm.), acrylic on canvas, a diptych by Kumi Sugai.

Speech grows golden in the black sun of silence.

Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-1972), Argentine poet

in a fraction of a second. In the same way, I only want to use the most direct terms, like the indivisible elements of modern physics. This is why I use basic primary colours.

■ **Cadmium red, white and black, which are also the colours of your sports cars. In what sense are these colours 'basic' for you?**

K.S.: Red, black and white are colours that everyone knows. Even though the light may change according to time and place, in our hearts red stays the same. Blue or violet on the other hand change with the light—and so do my states of mind! I will always present white, red and black as they are. Straight, without any frills. What matters, finally, is not so much the colours particularly as the way in which my canvases fit together.

S-Circles **(1994, 200 x 113 cm.), acrylic on canvas by Kuml Sugai.**

© J. Hyde. Paris

They form a totality, like a body, in which I am fully myself. In the past, before I changed styles, before I acquired my first red sports car....

■ **. . . before your terrible accident in 1967?**

K.S.: Yes. At that time I "voided" myself in certain works, I gave them everything I'd got, whereas I stayed on the surface with others, in which I put less of myself. I felt divided. I needed to stand back. And so I decided to stop doing things that did not flow from the depths of my being. It was more honest for other people and for myself. Since then, with the aid of my brushes and my primary colours, I have given to others "something" that does not yet have a name. Something that can be immediately given and received, not only today but in three hundred years' time, or later. Something that is beyond current human language. It is impossible and even useless to express anything in front of one of my paintings. You can only absorb the shock in silence.

■ **So what you do has little in common with art, past or present?**

K.S.: Modern society is a society of gadgets, of the superfluous, where only certain needs such as food and shelter are considered useful and therefore necessary. Everything else is an extra, including art, including a painting by a great master. I am convinced that we are entering a new age whose first inklings are these buildings with right angles, pure lines.

■ **This futuristic architecture regarded by its detractors as the reflection of an inner void. . .**

K.S.: It is in a completely denuded and perhaps even speechless universe where people will only communicate via signals that art as I see it will become indispensable. When we have got rid of everything that is unnecessary, art will become necessary: it alone will be able to support a world reduced to its simplest form of expression. ■

Interview by **MYRIAM SMADJA**

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A moment of fulfilment

by Claude Louis-Combet

In a celebrated lecture, the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke spoke of "the great silence that reigns around things". This close silence exists to calm the passions and to increase the acuity of our perception of other creatures. It is a silence of plenitude and grace that even bursts of speech and laughter cannot spoil. It is part and parcel of the words we need to hear in order to fully exist, and of an appearance and a countenance that encourage communication. Without silence, there would be no speech.

There is always a moment when time's tensions slacken and when space retires. We seize this moment from the intensity of a beloved face or in the profound harmony that unites us with the contours and rhythm of a landscape. It is an instant of silence and an instant of presence in the tumult of life—solitude, perhaps, but without isolation or dislocation.

The contemplative side of our being, which the turmoil of the day has not destroyed, then holds sway and lets us feel the continuity of our being with the elective realities that people our inner lives. All the mystics have lived with this experience in the background. But the man whose only faith is in man and whose only love is in the world, is not necessarily deprived of the certainty of such a bonding. It is possible in the silence of stilled passions. ■

CLAUDE LOUIS-COMBET
is a French poet and writer whose recently published works include *Blesse, ronce noir* ("Wound, Black Bramble", 1995) and *Miroirs du texte* ("Mirrors of the Text", 1995).

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An inner experience

by Jacques Castermane

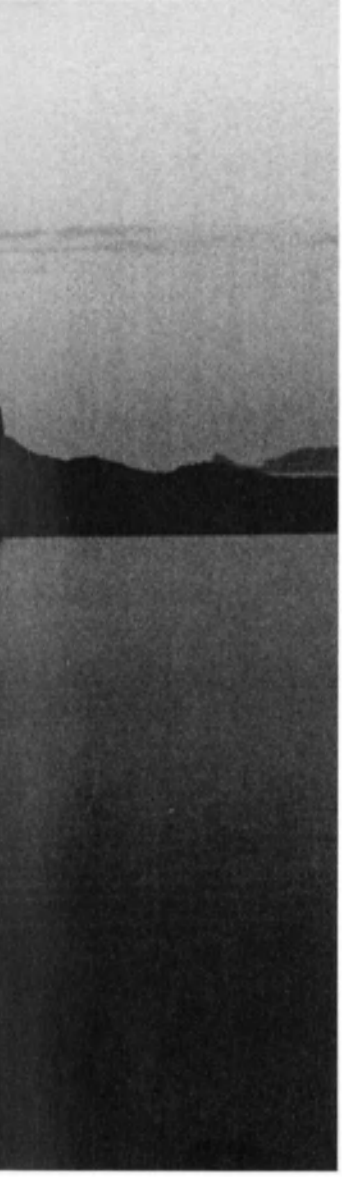
Mysterious experiences that lead to inner silence and a sense of life's unity

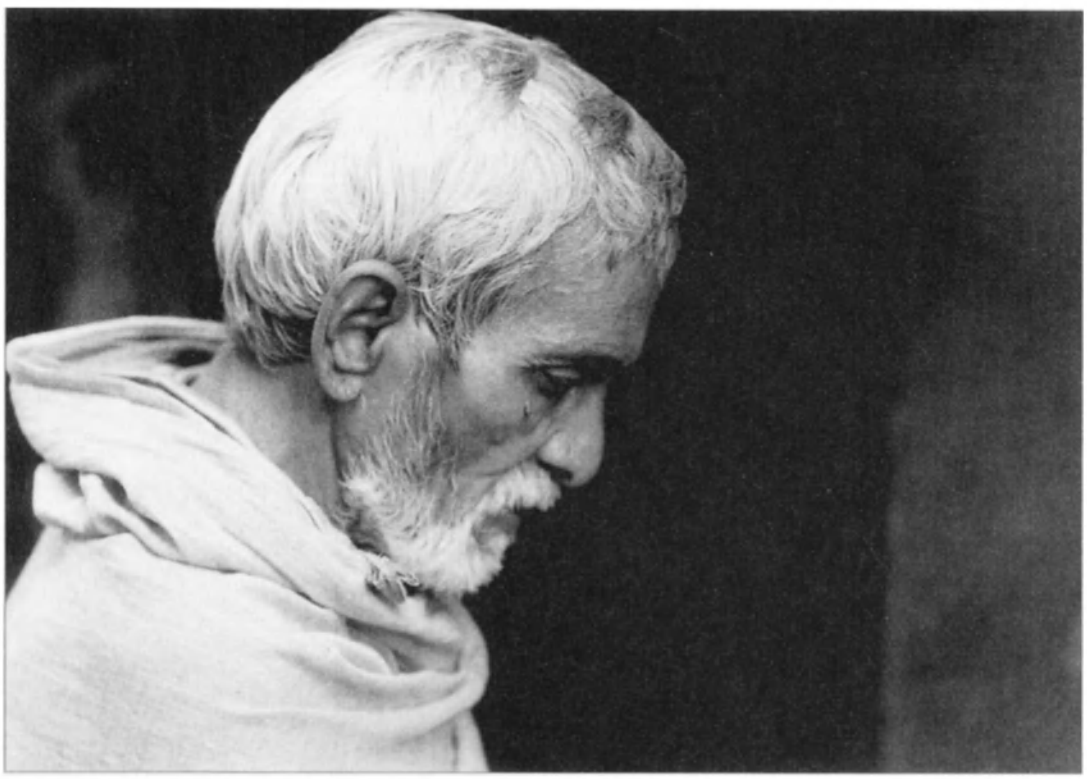
Silence is usually defined as the absence of noise. However, it is also an inner experience, and one that affects each of us on different levels. The happy, fulfilled person finds comfort in silence. The old fisherman sitting for hours on end gazing at the sea and the farmer who looks out over his land both know this soothing silence, the fruit of a life of toil. And we are all familiar with the emotion that wells up during the silence, however brief, that honours the dead. This silence has a special quality, questioning those who observe it about the meaning of existence. Anyone who has entered a temple in Kyoto or a cathedral in Europe has been struck by it, a silence which stops the visitor short as soon as the threshold is crossed. It is disturbing, and even sometimes threatening, because the visitor feels it to be a door opening onto mystery.

But the silence of the inner life is even more profound. When people experience this

It is the silent man who must be listened to.

Japanese proverb





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Above, on the coast near St. Malo (France).
Right, Hindu ascetic or sadhu in Nepal.

silence, they know the unity of life. Such an experience can be the starting point of spiritual development.

All experience is ephemeral. But with practice, experience of profound silence can become a permanent condition. It is the state of being of someone who has achieved maturity, a mental disposition whereby a person discerns, through the conflicts and clashes of everyday life, an essential unity. Those who display this unity in their daily lives have progressed from adulthood to maturity.

The art of silence opens the doorway from transient to lasting experience.

The promise of beauty

Various moments in life provide the conditions for such an experience—contemplation of nature or art, for example, or the love that joins two persons. Wherever the promise of beauty takes you, there is an opportunity to experience inner silence.

What is beauty? If we agree with Kant, beauty is a quality that is innate to an object. But while it concerns the object, we must admit that it also concerns the subject. When I listen to a piece of music, what makes me say "it's beautiful" is not only the work as it is interpreted, but also and above all the way in which I am affected by the interpretation. Is this a matter of taste? It is judgment based on taste, says Kant. At all events, the word "beautiful" denotes a quality experienced by a person and agreeable to that person. Sometimes, when you listen to a sonata or a symphony that you have heard a hundred times, the quality that affects you on this specific occasion is such that the word "beautiful" is no longer adequate to express your feelings. This is an experience in which one's feelings cannot be described by words.

It is a strange moment during which one can sometimes even feel alien to the object. It may happen that there is no more object, no

Silence is deep as eternity, speech is shallow as time.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Scottish historian and philosopher

more symphony, no more orchestra, no more conductor! In this unexpected experience there is no longer an object that is distinct from a subject. There is no longer a distinction between subject and object. At this point you are gripped by silence.

This silence, this absence of all materiality, is the inexpressible presence of what lies beyond the subject-object differentiation, beyond duality.

What can be said of this silence? This is how it was once described to me by someone who had experienced what she called "a curious moment".

"I was strolling on the sea-shore, watching the sun go down. I stopped. It was beautiful. No, suddenly, it had nothing to do with what is called beautiful. It was peculiar. It was as if I were immersed in a totally different reality. Everything within me became astonishingly calm, and I felt a very great inner force . . . freedom. I knew nothing, and yet I knew everything. I no longer belonged to myself, and at the same time I was in a sense more myself than I had ever been. A wave of silence suffused me. I shivered. A shiver of joy and at the same time a shiver of fear. It was as if I had rediscovered something known while confronted with the unknown. Then I heard someone say, 'It's magnificent, isn't it?' I listened, and then it was all over."

At the moment when consciousness, which makes the distinction between subject and object, reasserts its ascendancy, "it's all over." Immediately, the experience fades away into memory. Few people try to understand what has really happened during such a "curious" moment.

These are experiences in which what is called silence reveals a reality that transcends ordinary reality. What is discovered is transcendence.

The word "transcendence" has several meanings. It can denote a reality that is beyond the space-time horizon, infinitely beyond human beings and the condition in which they live. It can also denote an experience that opens

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The Phaung Daw U pagoda on Lake Inlee (Myanmar).

Ernst Haas © Magnum, Paris

Vaulting in Exeter Cathedral (United Kingdom, 13th-14th centuries).

human consciousness to another dimension of the self. In this case transcendence is immanent in the individual.

It may seem highly subjective to say that what is experienced in a state of silence touches on a reality that surpasses ordinary reality. But that is the case!

The person as subject is the seat of subjective experiences. What interests us when we talk about inner silence is the person as subject. The person as subject cannot be defined using the objective criteria that enable us to study the person-object. The person as subject is someone who feels, experiences, and suffers, who knows joy and sadness, well-being and hardship, confidence and mistrust.

Clearly this subjective side must be relegated to the background in a science laboratory, where objective measurement is all that matters. Human feelings may lead to error by subverting the objectivity demanded by scientific research.

But when we are concerned with the person as subject, it is objective criteria that may lead to error. To say dismissively that "what you felt is purely subjective!" is to reduce the human being to an object, a thing!

What I feel when I walk in the forest or

slowly make my way to the top of a mountain is, fortunately, a subjective experience. Listening to Mozart or Debussy is also a subjective experience. And when tenderness unites two persons who love each other and when they become one, this too is a subjective experience in which they rediscover the great silence that rises from the depths of being.

When we go to concerts and museums or into the world of nature, is it not to enjoy and repeat the experience of this transcendent "I"?

When we tenderly draw near to the person we love, is it not to re-live the experience of immanent transcendence, that of the person as subject?

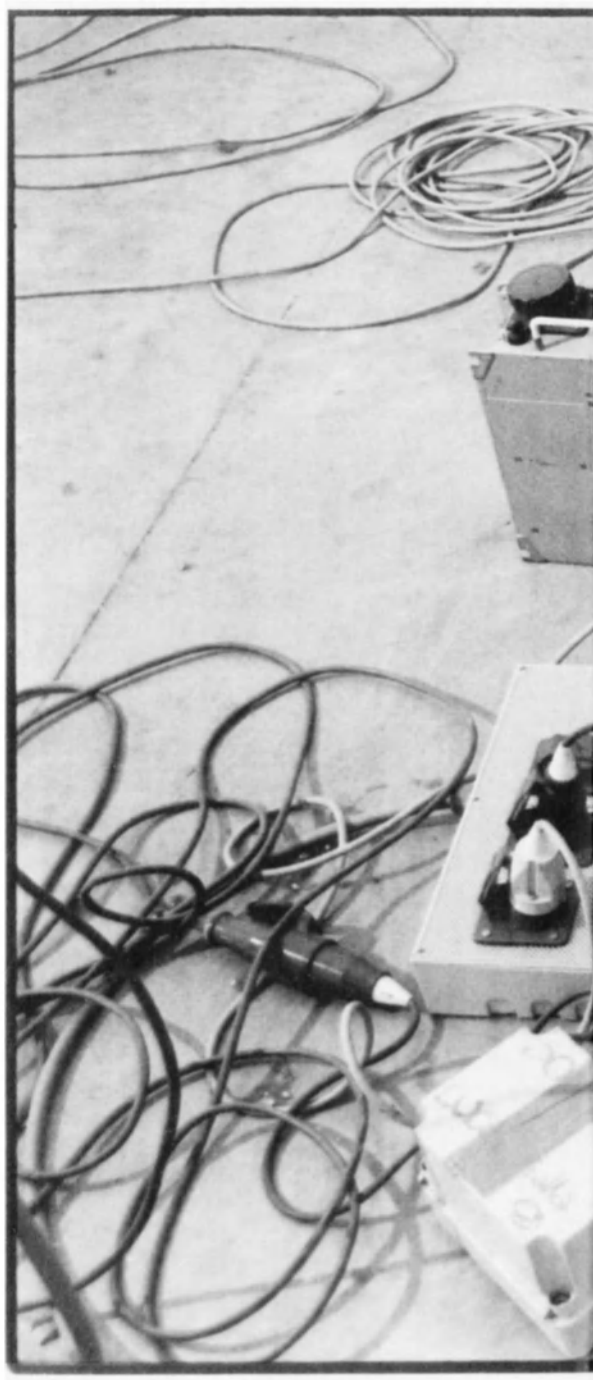
The art of silence

But it is not the sunset, nor the piece of music, nor the loved one that is the cause of the fulfilment, the inner order and the unity we feel. These are merely the circumstances that reveal our innate potentialities. While this experience lasts, we fleetingly perceive *what we are* in the depths of *our being*.

This is why it is important to ask oneself the question, "How can I become what I have experienced, how can I make the transition from a short-lived experience to a permanent state of being?"

The answer is by practising silence, the art of silence.

Etymologically, the Latin word for art, *ars*, means "way of being". It is even "a way of stretching towards an order dictated by the gods". In a sense, artists are always concerned by transcendence. In the same way, human beings growing to maturity must take themselves in hand, just as a craftsman takes a piece of unfinished work in his hands. Self-perfection is the goal. Permanent inner silence is the fruit of this accomplishment.



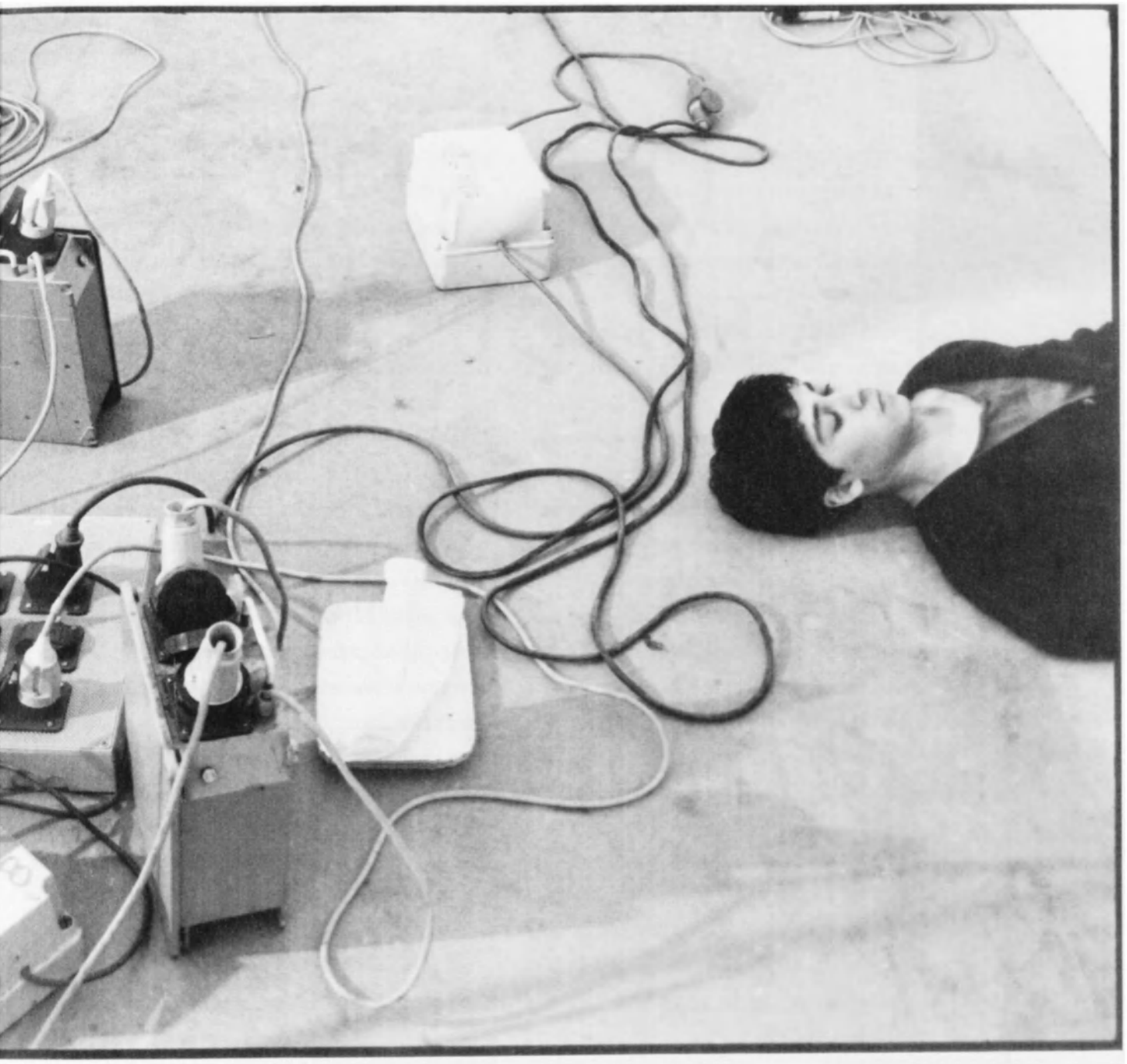
A scene from *Fuoco centrale* (1995), a play staged by the Teatro Valdoca Company in Italy.

Western spirituality tends to be so concerned with the creation of something external that a longing for inner creation, for the great peace of the soul, is considered a waste of time or even an attempt to escape from the real world.

In the West a person who regularly practises an art generally seeks to acquire knowledge that culminates in a performance. The art of silence, on the other hand, is directed towards *knowing how to be*, achieving the capacity to feel and to remain calm, peaceful and serene in the circumstances we face in our daily lives.

Silence alone is great, all the rest is weakness.

Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863), French poet



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What is the "material" that must be worked on and shaped by the artisan's hand? It is his or her own body.

But is it really possible that a physical exercise can lead humankind to the "greatest good"? Let us not forget that the body consists of three factors. It is substance, matter. It is also form. The substance assumes feminine or masculine form, youthful or elderly form. But these two factors are characteristic of a corpse as well as a living body. They do not define a living person. Living consists of doing, of action, of all the actions through which people are present in the world.

The practice of silence relates to this last factor. The art of silence consists in raising actions that are normally unconscious to the level of conscious experience. The most commonplace act can then become the object of a specific exercise: sitting down, walking, breathing. All the arts, from singing to making pottery, dancing and even archery or fencing, provide those who practise them regularly with the opportunity to become themselves. They provide an opportunity to achieve maturity, they open the person to immanent transcendence, which is manifested "silently" in every aspect of their lives. ■

JACQUES CASTERMANE, of Belgium, is director of the Dürckheim Centre (France). He is the author of *Les leçons de K. G. Dürckheim: premiers pas sur le chemin initiatique* ("The Lessons of K. G. Dürckheim: First Steps on the Initiatory Path", 1988).

Unesco/Gil Jacques, Montréal

THE CITY, ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

At the dawn of the twenty-first century urban living poses a major challenge to which effective, and above all timely, responses must be found. No treatment can work unless a diagnosis is made in good time.

It is true that we produce studies, analyses and reports on the critical situation in cities and the damage inflicted on the environment and on citizens, but we have a moral obligation to deal with these problems by taking *preventive* action. This "time ethic" is important if action is to be effective. Any clinical analyst knows that a diagnosis should be good without aspiring to be perfect, for only an autopsy can provide the perfect diagnosis, and by then it is too late. The same applies to the environment. Since any process is potentially irreversible, we must have the courage to act, however unpopular that action might be, while treatment is still possible.

If current demographic forecasts turn out to be correct, by the year 2000 one human being out of every two will be living in a city. By 2035, three thousand million more people will be living in the urban settlements that exist today. These forecasts may not materialize if we succeed in containing population growth. We cannot tell the 250,000 newcomers that our planet welcomes each day that there is no room for them and that we do not want them. So how can we slow down population growth?

Education—especially the education of women in urban and rural environments—is the key factor. Education can, independently of ideological or religious belief, help to reduce fertility rates rapidly by something like 50 to 60 per cent.

In December 1993, at a meeting held under the auspices of UNESCO, UNICEF and the United Nations, the world's nine most populous countries (the home of 72 per cent of the world's illiterates and 56 per cent of world population) agreed that only education could enable every woman and every man to control their own destinies. Some of these countries, including India, have already decided to increase the percentage of their gross domestic product set aside for education. This kind of measure could restrain population growth while ensuring respect for individual freedom.

Megacities under fire

It is also necessary to improve the quality of life, above all in rural areas. This is the only way to prevent migration from these areas to the outskirts of big cities and even to other countries seen as more prosperous. To this end we must mobilize solidarity between and within nations in order to distribute resources more evenly. If we can boost education—doubling investment in it—and at the same time improve the quality of life, we shall succeed in containing population growth.

If we fail to do this, we shall have to build a thousand cities of three million inhabitants in the next forty years, twenty-five a year. These figures starkly demonstrate the extreme magnitude of the urban phenomenon.

Cities, which have generated such vital concepts and practices as civic virtues, urbanity, civilization, politics and democracy, which were once a well-spring of community solidarity, have for many people become synonymous with disorder, chaos and radical upheaval, with violence, pollution, insecurity, the breakdown of social cohesion, wastage and delinquency. Cities, it is said, are machines for manufacturing poverty and social inequality. They are machines for destroying the natural environment and the human environment. When people talk about cities they use such terms as disruption, dislocation, dehumanization.

When leading experts look at the megacities of the north and the vast, sprawling conurbations of the south, whose identity is precarious or non-existent, they even talk of the end of the city, the death of the "polis."

A modern scapegoat

I do not share this pessimism. I feel that we are at the beginning of something new. For centuries we have been living in a war culture. Today we are moving from the argument of force to the force of argument. We are at the beginning of a universal culture—the culture of peace. Now we must invent a new kind of city.

With the destructuring of industrial society, the factory has been replaced as the battlefield of what was formerly known as the class struggle by the urban fabric, by the city itself, the place where the new fissures in society appear. But let us not confuse cause and effect. The deterioration of community living in the fringe areas of big cities is not the reason why their inhabitants are the victims of segregation; on the contrary, it is the social exclusion of citizens that is responsible for the precarity of urban life and the troubled situation in these neighbourhoods.

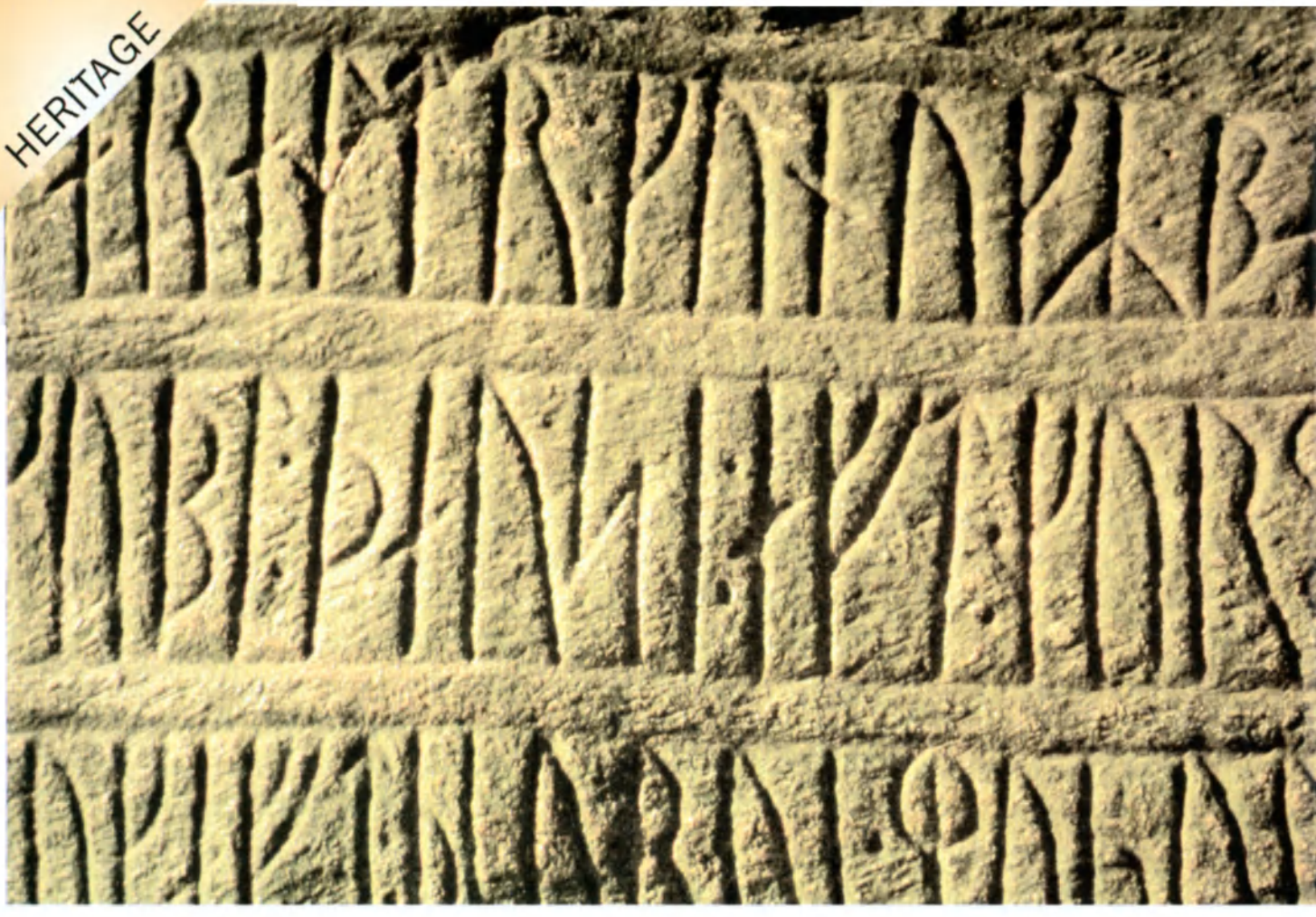
It is tempting to blame the city for our feelings of dissatisfaction whereas they are actually the result of the shortcomings of today's economy and social structure. We have been unable to reconcile increased productivity with increased employment, wealth creation with widespread well-being, self-assertion with community solidarity, personal self-reliance with social cohesion. To blame all this on cities is to turn a blind eye to problems so complex that it is only too easy to indulge in escapism and find excuses.

We must face up to the complexity of today's problems, drawing not only on our own resources and imagination but on the experience of others, of those who in similar situations have found appropriate responses. Experience is the outcome of successes and failures and it can help save time by diverting us from the false trails that in similar circumstances have led others to grief. Experience prompts us to make use of ideas which initially nobody believed in and which in the end were the only ones that proved effective.

The urban challenge

The Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 launched some of these ideas and invited the international community to promote sustainable development in a world at peace, a world in which access to decent urban housing should also be a basic human right. UNESCO, which has made sustainable development and the rehabilitation of cities two of its major objectives, is making an important new contribution in this field.

We have enlisted the support of cities, through their mayors, in an endeavour to introduce the principles of a culture of peace into everyday life. We must rise daily to the challenge of constructing the defences of peace in people's minds, and this is why we have added to the intergovernmental dimension of UNESCO the dimension of close contact that is found in the local urban environment. ■



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THE RUNE-STONES OF JELLING

by Jens Boel

Runic inscriptions and imposing burial mounds over a thousand years old record the encounter between paganism and Christianity in a Danish village site that was registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1994

The little village of Jelling, in the heart of the peaceful countryside of Eastern Jutland, is dominated by two large burial mounds shaped like truncated cones. Between them is a typical Danish village church, a simple white-washed, medieval stone building. In front of the church stand two runic stones. The mounds and rune-stones form one of the most important Viking sites in Scandinavia.

The rune-stones were raised more than a thousand years ago, one by the Viking King Gorm the Old, and the other by his son, King Harald Bluetooth. Each of them bears witness to an ancient culture and to the transition from pagan Norse religious beliefs to Christianity. Today, many centuries later, we do not know the full significance of the runic stones and mounds nor why the site was constructed at all. However, we are not completely in the dark. The writing on the stones can be deciphered and archaeological excavations have lifted part of the mystery.

The mounds and stones date from the mid-tenth century and are outstanding examples of the pagan Nordic culture. The present church was constructed around 1100, but it was preceded by at least three wooden churches, all of which were destroyed by fire. The first church was probably built by King Harald, who converted to Christianity around 965.

Harald's runic stone is three-sided. It is the biggest of its kind in Scandinavia (2.5 metres high). Unlike the smaller one, it stands in its original position, exactly midway between the two mounds. Its inscription reads: "King Harald bade this monument be made in memory of Gorm his father and Thyra his mother, that Harald who won for himself all Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian."

The inscription is surmounted by a carving of a typical Nordic dragon in interlaced ornament. On the southwest face of the stone the earliest depiction of Christ in

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Scandinavia can be seen. He is standing surrounded by ornaments from which he seems to emerge, and beneath him runs the final words of the inscription: "and made the Danes Christians".

The original position of the smaller stone is not known, but around 1630 it was moved to its present location next to Harald's stone. The inscription on it reads: "King Gorm made this monument to his wife Thyra, Denmark's ornament."

The message conveyed by these words has provoked much debate among scholars, at least since some local people accidentally discovered a burial chamber in the north mound when they were searching for water during the summer of 1820.

FACTS AND FICTION

Some facts are incontrovertible. During the reigns of Gorm and his son, Harald Bluetooth, Jelling was a royal manor, although it is uncertain whether the kings resided there permanently. Both father and son ruled a realm known as Denmark, and Harald claimed to be the ruler of Norway as well. King Gorm erected a stone in Jelling in memory of his wife, Thyra, and Harald did the same for both of his parents after Gorm's death in 958. There is every probability that Gorm was buried in the north mound.

It may be assumed that the two mounds, today regarded as excellent feats of engineering, were laid out by Gorm after Thyra's death as a joint funerary monument. However, the south mound was only completed in 972, and it contains no burial chamber. Archaeological excavations have led to the discovery of a grave chamber in the first wooden church, containing the skeletal remains of a man. The excavations revealed that the burial and the building were established at the same time and that the man in the grave had been buried elsewhere once before. Archaeologists conclude that King Harald probably transferred his father's bones to the impressive wooden church he built after he had officially introduced Christianity to Denmark. By giving King Gorm a Christian funeral Harald made a clear religious and political demonstration. As for Queen Thyra, no trace of her grave has yet been found, and the mystery of where she was buried remains.

A SITE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Every new generation interprets history in a different way corresponding to the kind of world and problems that confront it. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the national importance of the Jelling site was stressed. Here could be seen in a clear and instructive way the emergence of Denmark as a unified kingdom with the succession passing from father to son. Christianization was also emphasized as evidence of a major victory for civilization and progress.

Today these views are regarded as far too simplistic. It is not at all clear what the notion "Denmark" actually meant at that time. Although it is generally accepted that the Christian faith was formally introduced in Denmark during the reign of King

Opposite page, detail of the runic inscription engraved on King Harald's stone.

Right, the runic stones of King Gorm (foreground) and King Harald. The latter is adorned with a depiction of Christ.

The Jelling site

A. Protected area
B. Church and cemetery
C. The mounds
D. The two runic stones

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The northern mound and church at Jelling.

SOME KEY EVENTS:

The Viking Age: c. 750-1050

First Viking attacks in Western Europe: before 792

Vikings besiege Paris: 885-886

King Gorm is buried in Jelling: 958

King Harald Bluetooth converts to Christianity: circa 965

King Sweyn Forkbeard conquers England: 1013

Harald it should not be forgotten that pagan peasant traditions persisted for centuries in Christian disguise and continued to play an important role. The Danes did not become Christians overnight.

It would be tempting in 1996 to see the Jelling monuments as evidence of a peaceful meeting of cultures, a transition to Christianity that deliberately included pagan mounds. After having been received into Christianity, King Harald may have wished to establish an awe-inspiring memorial by fusing the pagan monuments to the new Christian monument, the church. As the leading expert on the Jelling monuments, Knud J. Krogh, has written: ". . . consciously or unconsciously the new monument becomes an expression of continuity in the midst of religious change".

THE VIKING SAGA

Until recently the traditional image of the Vikings as presented in generations of schoolbooks was that of bloodthirsty invaders who plundered and burned monasteries in England, France or Ireland. This was primarily due to the fact that the dominant historical sources were written by monks and other victims of Viking pirates.

Today it has become widely acknowledged that the Vikings were much more than warriors and pirates. Most Scandinavians in the Viking age, c. 750-1050, lived rather undramatically and peacefully, cultivating the land, breeding their animals, plying their trades, doing business and so on. But it is also true that adventurous travelling was an important part of the Viking civilization. Among the Vikings were kings engaged in high politics, engineers who built castles and bridges, merchants who traded with Russia or Ireland, and explorers who colonized the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. Vikings reached America around the year 1000, the first Europeans to do so.

The Vikings became masters of the sea because of their sophisticated ships. They travelled, bargained and plundered and sometimes settled in the lands they discovered. For three centuries they left their mark in the Northern and Western hemispheres as far away from Scandinavia as Byzantium.

Harald's runic stone in Jelling, on the other hand, testifies how cultural influence from the South, in the shape of Christianity, changed the Viking civilization by blending with traditional beliefs and gradually dominating and taking over from them. Pagan beliefs were defeated by Christianity because the latter appeared more powerful than the traditional religion. For the Vikings conversion was probably a way of coping with the strong continental European powers. Thanks to contemporary written sources it is possible to date the official Danish conversion rather precisely and to give a fairly accurate account of how it happened.

At a feast at King Harald's court one evening around 965 a priest named Poppo was present. He claimed that the Vikings worshipped false gods and that there was only one true God who was one with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. King Harald asked whether he was prepared to prove his statement by undergoing an ordeal. Without hesitation Poppo said that he was. The King then ordered the priest to be taken into custody. The following morning he heated a very heavy piece of iron and then ordered the priest to carry it, thus bearing witness to his Christian faith. Poppo grasped the glowing iron and carried it as long as the King wished. He then showed that his hand was uninjured, thereby convincing everybody present about the truth of the Christian faith. The upshot was that King Harald converted to Christianity and commanded his people to reject pagan idols.

This is the story according to contemporary accounts. Several historians have argued that the incident was contrived by Harald and some of his close advisors in order to justify a conversion believed to be a political necessity. The German King Otto I had been crowned as Roman Emperor in 962 and had thus become the supreme secular master of Christianity. He had already taken measures showing that he was not prepared to respect the sovereignty of King Harald's pagan kingdom. In order to show the powerful Christian Church that it could count on him, Harald may have converted as a way of coping with this potential threat. ■

The quest for environment-friendly tourism

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WORLD TOURISM: WHERE NEXT?

by France Bequette

Above, used batteries at the foot of K-2, the world's second highest peak, in the Karakorum mountain range.

When some 2,000 years ago the Greek geographer Strabo described how the priests of Crocodilopolis in Egypt waited for the arrival of Roman "tourists" before they began the ritual animal sacrifice to feed the sacred crocodiles of the god Sebek, little did he know that tourism was destined to become so popular that one day half a billion people would be visiting the earth's most beautiful places.

World Tourism Organization (WTO) forecasts indicate that by the year 2000 international tourist arrivals will total approximately 661 million, an annual growth rate of 3.8 per cent. The hundreds of millions of tourists who each year travel in their own countries can be added to this figure. How can environmental protection, the balanced exploitation of natural resources, equitable access to the world heritage—major challenges of our time—be reconciled with the expansion of the tourist industry?

A CHILD OF PROSPERITY

Tourism is undeniably a powerful tool for development, but the forms it has taken so far have often been criticized for such negative impacts as excessive use of land, water and energy, the production of waste, and heavy pressure on the social environment and the historic and cultural heritage.

The Council of Europe—Europe is the world's most important region for "generating" and receiving tourists—considers that one reason for these negative impacts is lack of planning and management. Whether tourism has good or bad effects will hinge at least partly on what management initiatives are taken by the tourist-generating and receiving countries.

The major advantage of tourism is that it brings in currency. In 1992 the turnover from tourism was some $3.1 trillion, and the tourist industry employed around 130 million people, or one in fourteen workers worldwide. In a recent study entitled *Tourisme et environnement en Méditerranée* ("Tourism and Environment in the Mediterranean Region") Robert Lanquar notes that tourism is primarily a social phenomenon. "In comparison to the main traditional areas of economic activity, tourism is not a response to people's basic needs but to a lifestyle made possible by the prosperity of broad social strata in the industrialized nations. It is a recent historical phenomenon."

FRANCE BEQUETTE is a Franco-American journalist specializing in environmental questions.

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Above, tourists in Thailand.

Above right, one of the Maldive Islands.

The days of "real journeys" offering what the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss called "a spectacle in all its splendour, not yet spoiled, contaminated and ruined" are over. We must accept the fact that there are no more unvisited places on earth and that everyone has the right to go anywhere. But that is no excuse for turning the Himalayas or the Sahara into rubbish tips, for tour organizers to advertise religious ceremonies in Bali as tourist attractions or for creating an amusement park in the heart of Angkor Wat, Cambodia's complex of sacred temples.

Of course many tourists steer clear of the concrete holiday megacentres that disfigure the coasts of France, Spain, Mexico and Thailand. But even off this well-beaten track, too massive an influx of visitors can harm the plant and animal life and even the social fabric of the regions they frequent. "Too many of the people, companies and even politicians involved in tourism," says the Council of Europe, "are only interested in maximizing short-term profits." All too often they succeed in circumventing the laws protecting the environment. Such "dispensations" pose an extremely difficult problem.

THE RIGHT CHOICE

The world's natural and cultural heritage is an inalienable possession that should be transmitted intact to future generations. Many states that lack exploitable natural resources depend on tourism for a considerable percentage of their income. But tourism must be carefully planned and controlled if it is to be sustainable.

The mountain kingdom of Bhutan, and the Maldive Islands in the Indian Ocean have been studied by Edward Inskeep for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Bhutan, which is located high on the eastern slopes of the Himalayas and has a Buddhist culture, possesses a chain of fortified monasteries and palaces. In 1995 only 5,500 tourists from non-neighbouring countries (exclusively in organized groups) were allowed into the country. Their average stay was nine days, and they spent a minimum of 200 dollars per day and per person. Tourists in Bhutan stick to carefully planned routes, and new buildings made to house them must comply with the canons of traditional architecture and be equipped to treat sewage. In 1987 a commission investigated the negative influence of tourists on the religious practices of young people and made a number temples out of bounds to foreigners.

The Maldives, a small chain of islands in the Indian Ocean, is a Muslim country with a limited land area. Income from tourism represents nearly 20 per cent of Gross National Product. Holiday installations for tourists have been set up on uninhabited islands to prevent the social and cultural life of the local population (less than 200,000 people) from suffering.

THREATS TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

Almost one third of the world's tourists are visitors to the Mediterranean countries, where the growth-rate of tourism in some coastal areas has been spectacular. Malta is a case in point. In 1993, this small island (with an area 316 km² and 350,000 inhabitants, it has one of the world's highest population densities) received 1,063,069 visitors who spent an estimated $542 million.

The increase in numbers, especially in the summer months, imposes considerable strain on the supply of water, which is very scarce on Malta—it has been estimated that tourists use twice as much water as the permanent residents. Desalination plants consume a great deal of energy, and a new power station is being built to meet the increased demand. Most of the sewage is flushed untreated into the sea, and some sandy beaches often risk becoming polluted. Tourist pressure on historic sites and local communities is also very strong. The city of Mdina, for example, is visited by an average of 1,500 tourists each day, a high influx that is causing various kinds of harm.

FURTHER READING

Tourism and Environment in European Countries,
Council of Europe, 1995.

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Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1995
(in English, French and Spanish).

"Sustainable Tourism Development"
in the
Industry and Environment journal,
Vol. 15, no. 3-4, UNEP, July-December 1992.

Nature Conservation and Tourism in Protected Areas,
a Council of Europe seminar, 1991.

Guidelines: Development of National Parks and Protected Areas for Tourism,
WTO and UNEP, 1992.

Tourisme et culture, De la coexistence au partenariat,
Editions American Express, Paris, 1993.

Tourisme et environnement en Méditerranée, Enjeux et prospective,
Robert Lanquar, preface by Michel Batisse, Les Fascicules du Plan Bleu no. 8, Editions Economica, Paris, 1995.

The Maltese government has taken steps to plan tourism development and manage access to sites and monuments in order to respect their carrying capacity, a concept defined by the World Tourism Organization as "the level of visitor use an area can accommodate with high levels of satisfaction for visitors and few negative effects on resources."

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

UNESCO is aware of the need to strike a balance between tourism, culture and development, and encourages study and action in four areas: defence and promotion of the cultural heritage and cultural identity; protection of the natural environment against inroads from tourism; encouragement of a form of tourism that respects the social, cultural and natural environment and provides a basis for development; extension of cultural tourism activities that may generate income and jobs, especially for young people in developing countries.

A tourist with local people in Goa (India).

Martin Parr © Magnum, Paris

Tourists on the Acropolis in Athens (Greece).

Martin Parr © Magnum, Paris

A World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, whose sponsors included UNESCO, via its Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and World Heritage Centre, was held on 27 and 28 April 1995 in Lanzarote in the Canary Islands (Spain). The 500 participants adopted a Charter for Sustainable Tourism which emphasizes that "tourism is ambivalent, since it can contribute positively to socio-economic and cultural achievement, [but also] to the degradation of the environment and the loss of local identity, and should therefore be approached with a global methodology".

Beautiful places are bound to attract visitors. Everyone involved in tourism must act responsibly. Otherwise the only solution will be to close threatened sites and monuments to visitors and make copies of them, as France has done for the prehistoric caves of Lascaux—or else to organize virtual-reality tourism with computer-generated images.

initiatives

Tourism for peace

"At a time when Israel, Palestine and their Arab neighbours are involved in a peace process, it is vital that the heritage of these countries, among the richest in the world, should become a factor in cultural, economic and social development and a pivot of understanding and exchange for people all over the world."

These words were spoken in October 1994 by Gilbert Trigano, until 1993 president of the internationally known tourist organization Club Méditerranée, when presenting to Heads of State at the Middle East-North African Economic Summit a project for a university of tourism and culture for peace. The Summit, held in Casablanca under the presidency of Morocco's King Hassan, gave the project an enthusiastic welcome. In all probability, the first two branches of the university will be located in Israel and Palestine.

The project was endorsed by King Hassan, and Tunisia, Italy and France have already expressed a desire to take part. A three-year course involving 900 hours of coursework per year will be offered to students via satellite television links, which will considerably reduce costs. Teachers will visit each branch campus in turn so as to make personal contact with their students. Theoretical studies will alternate with paid training periods in the tourist industry totalling three or four months a year.

The first year will concentrate on the basics common to all jobs in the tourist industry and will emphasize the importance of the cultural role of tourism. The second and third years will concentrate on the main fields of activity in the industry, with the final semester being devoted to the goal of "becoming an entrepreneur". The television equipment is being tested this spring, and the university will "open for business" in September.

In recognition of the fact that this initiative is in line with UNESCO's goals, on 25 June 1995 Director-General Federico Mayor signed a convention of co-operation with the "Association en faveur du Tourisme et de la Culture pour la Paix" (Association of Tourism and Culture for Peace), which was also initialled by the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, Antonio Enríquez Savignac. Gilbert Trigano feels a mixture of hope and anxiety. Anxiety because this is the first interstate operation of its kind; hope because of its potential for promoting understanding and peace. ■

Photo © Ch. Lionel-D. Dupont, Vallauris

CALLING ALL FROG-LOVERS

For the second year running, a French association called "Espaces naturels de France", has been trying to save batrachians (frogs and toads), which in spring emerge from their winter shelters and hop to their mating grounds under cover of darkness. Many of the unfortunate amphibians are run over when crossing roads. The association has appealed to all frog lovers to identify crossing points and signpost them for motorists. Information is centralized in a "frog clearing house". In Germany, Switzerland and eastern France special underground "frogways" have been built at considerable cost. Frogs and toads are excellent indicators of a wetland's state of health, and scientists are concerned about their declining numbers worldwide.

10 YEARS OF ACTION TO SAFEGUARD THE OZONE LAYER

The Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, signed in Vienna (Austria) in 1985, calls for the phasing out of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other chemical ozone-depleting substances (ODS) that destroy the vital veil of ozone that protects us from the sun's damaging ultraviolet radiation. An international effort in this direction is being co-ordinated by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In 1987, the Montreal Protocol was adopted. Among its requirements are an eventual 50 per cent reduction in the use of five CFCs before the year 2000. A $240-million Multilateral Fund has been created to help developing countries eliminate CFCs and ODS. By 1995 elimination was well underway in the developed countries and there had been some progress in the developing countries. However, the overall decrease masked a 46 per cent increase in developing-country CFC consumption and a world increase in HCFC (hydrochlorofluorocarbons) consumption of 130 per cent.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Gunter Pauli, director of the Zero Emissions Research Institute (ZERI) of the United Nations University (see page 43 of our March 1995 issue), has come up with a way of using wastes in some parts of Africa. Namibia and Tanzania export dried seaweed to Europe, the United States and Japan. When certain products intended for food, medicine or other uses have been extracted from the seaweed, the waste is discarded. Over 30 per cent of the people in the region suffer from iodine deficiency disorders, yet a variety of seaweeds are rich in iodine. Instead of depending on drugs sent by the World Health Organization to fight these diseases, Pauli suggests providing the population with iodine by using seaweed residues with other seaweed as an additive to cattle and poultry feed.

THE WHALE-WATCHING INDUSTRY

Whale migration sites are attracting increasing numbers of tourists. Whale watching is growing by nearly 10 per cent annually in Argentina, Brazil, the Caribbean, Mexico, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Norway and the United Kingdom. In Japan, for example, 55,000 tourists went whale-watching on the high seas in 1994, netting over $200 million for 21 communities that make a living from this new kind of photo safari. But too much intrusive observation by eco-tourists from boats or aircraft may be dangerously stressful to the marine mammals.

A DISCREET MONKEY

In 1984 British ecologist Mike Harrison discovered a monkey hitherto unknown to scientists, the sun-tailed guenon (*Ceropithecus solatus*) in Gabon's "forêt des Abeilles" (forest of the bees). Known to hunters as Mbaya or Makina, the monkey is extremely skilful in concealing itself. It feeds on plants and roots, like gorillas, but also on insects. By eating fruit, it helps to broadcast seeds and regenerate the forest. As an endangered species, it has been fully protected under Gabonese law after a campaign led by primatologist Jean-Pierre Gautier, director of studies at the Makandé Research Centre.

© J. P. Gautier

© Christophe Lepetit, Paris

KARIBA'S TROUBLED WATERS

David Manyonga, a Pan African News Agency correspondent, reports on the catastrophic situation in Kariba, a Zimbabwean town on the northern edge of the world's largest artificial lake. Established for a population of 5,000 persons in the 1950s at the same time as the lake, the town now has 25,000 inhabitants. "Our sewage," says the head of the town council, "was supposed to be treated then emptied into the Zambezi River below the dam, but the treatment machines broke down." Untreated sewage, iron and phosphates are now being dumped into the lake, and aquatic plants like the water hyacinth and Kariba grass (*Salvinia mosesta*), are impeding navigation. The fish supply is also affected: in 1995 more than 40 tonnes of contaminated fish had to be destroyed. Tourism, an important source of income, is threatened, as well as the health of the townspeople.

MIGRATING MONARCHS

Milions of orange and black monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) migrate every year from Canada (a 5,600-kilometre trip) and the United States to winter in the forests of Mexico. The winter of 1995-1996 was particularly cold and snowy, and a vast number of the butterflies died. Specialists are not unduly worried so far, for the butterflies are extremely prolific. However, there are fears that increased logging in the monarchs' wintering sites pose a threat by removing the protective cover that shields the butterflies from periodical cold waves.

THE INDONESIAN CORNUCOPIA

Indonesia's 17,000 islands are home to 10 per cent of the world's remaining rain forests, 10 per cent of all plant species, 12 per cent of all mammal species, 16 per cent of all reptile and amphibian species, 17 per cent of all bird species and 25 per cent of all the world's freshwater and marine fish species. Scientists estimate that 30 per cent of its plants and 90 per cent of its animals and insects have not yet been studied, identified or documented. Many are unique to the area. To protect its abundant biodiversity Indonesia has begun cataloguing and monitoring its rich biological resources as well as training researchers.

GLOBAL VIEW

OUR CREATIVE DIVERSITY: CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

An unprecedented report on the relationship between culture and development on a world-wide basis has been completed by the independent World Commission on Culture and Development, chaired by former United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. The product of three years work by the Commission, which was set up at UNESCO in 1992, the report is entitled *Our Creative Diversity* and is now available in book form from UNESCO*. "Development begins in human culture," notes Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar.

In addition to theoretical considerations on the cultural dimension of development, the report makes specific proposals for cultural and development policies. Among its recommendations are: drawing up a list of cultural rights which are not protected by existing international treaties; defining the bases of a new global ethics; and organizing an international forum of reflection on violence and pornography in the media.

In choosing the title of the report, the Commission wanted to emphasize its support for diversity, its concern for common welfare and the need to invent a new model for development.

* *Our Creative Diversity. Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development.* 302pp. 150 French francs.

DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

Development priorities and problems are critically discussed by international contributors in *Development Dialogue*, a journal published twice a year (in English) by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation of Uppsala (Sweden). The first issue of 1995, entitled "Making National Drug Policies a Development Priority", contains a strategy paper and 6 country studies (on Norway, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Australia, India and Mexico). An editorial notes that "about 2.5 billion people—or half the world's population—continue to be denied their right to health", that "the global pharmaceutical industry is estimated to turn over about $220 billion annually, out of which Third World countries, with three-quarters of the world's population, account for only $44 billion" and that "about 90% of the world's production of pharmaceuticals originates in industrialized countries, which also account for 80% of consumption".

Issue no. 2 of 1995 focuses on the funding of social and economic development. Among the contents are the opening address and final report of a conference held in Kampala (Uganda) in 1995 on "the role of independent funds as intermediaries for channelling money for social and economic development", and case studies from Ecuador, the Philippines, and several African countries.

"Plant genetic resources and agricultural biodiversity" is the theme of the first issue of 1996, which is still in press.

☛ Copies of *Development Dialogue* may be obtained from the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre,
Övre Slottsgatan 2, S-753 10 Uppsala, Sweden.
Tel: (46-18) 10 54 72;
Fax: (46-18) 12 20 72;
Telex: 76234 DHCENT S;
Cable: DHCENTRE.

BANGLADESH: AN ACTION PLAN FOR CHILDREN

As a contribution to Bangladesh's national action plan to improve child health, UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, has earmarked $250 million ($50 million per year) between 1996 and 2000. One of the first nations to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (3 August 1990), Bangladesh launched the plan, comprising 26 objectives to be achieved before the year 2000, in 1992. The objectives include reducing the infant mortality rate from 84 to 50 per thousand and the malnutrition rate of children under five from 68 to 38 per cent, increasing primary school enrolment from 81 to 95 per cent, and reducing the rate of maternal mortality.

UN LAUNCHES PROGRAMME TO BOOST AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

On 15 March 1996, Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, launched a multi-billion dollar programme to boost development in Africa over a ten-year period.

Coming on top of a series of UN actions carried out in the last 20 years by the United Nations to promote development in Africa (which contains 33 of the world's 48 least advanced countries), the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa is unprecedented in its scale. It is the UN's most significant mobilization of support for the people of a single continent and its largest co-ordinated action. The estimated cost of implementing the Initiative is $25 billion. The World Bank has agreed to lead in mobilizing over 85 per cent of this amount, the bulk of which will go to improving basic education and health.

The Special Initiative comprises 14 components, grouped into four themes reflecting development priorities defined by African governments and the international community.

Theme one is called *Give Development a Chance*. It consists of actions designed to create a propitious climate for development by contributing to peace-building; improving the mobilization of Africa's internal resources and encouraging external support; stimulating domestic savings and investment; and facilitating access to information technology.

Theme two is named *New Hope for the Upcoming Generation*. The largest resource commitment of the Special Initiative ($12.5 to $15.5 billion), it seeks to ensure basic education for all African children, increase the provision of health care and encourage job creation and the development of sustainable livelihoods.

Theme three, *Strengthening the Capacity for Governance*, is designed to expand capacities for transparent, responsible and effective governance, to help build independent judicial systems, support the functioning of parliaments and electoral processes and strengthen pluralist forces (unions, women's organizations and workers' associations).

The fourth theme, *Urgency and Survival Issues*, includes programmes designed to provide long-term food security and drought management (reducing land degradation, improving soil quality and increasing desertification control) as well as ensuring household water security for drinking and sanitation for at least 80 per cent of the population.

While taking part in each of the 14 components of the Special Initiative for Africa, UNESCO will be the lead agency in four programmes: Basic Education for all African Children, Communications for Peace-building, Harnessing Information Technology for Development, and Solar Energy.

NORTH-SOUTH SOLIDARITY

From 27 to 29 October 1995 in Vichy (France) some 1,500 supporters of France's Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (CCFD) and more than fifty of its partners from the Third World attended a meeting held to discuss North-South partnership in development. The meeting divided into 17 workshops, each of which examined a specific example of international solidarity in a local development initiative. Among the participants were the 1980 Nobel Peace-prize winner, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Argentina), Milica Lucic-Cavic, former president of the Centre for Anti-war Action of Belgrade, and the African historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Burkina-Faso).

☛ For further information about CCFD, please contact:
Comité catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement,
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MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES MEET IN BARCELONA

Representatives of social, economic and cultural life from the European Union countries and the entire Mediterranean region met in Barcelona for the *Fòrum Civil Euromed* organized by the Catalan Institute of the Mediterranean from 29 November to 1 December 1995. The topics discussed included communication, economic dynamics and social and cultural dialogue between peoples of the Mediterranean countries.

In collaboration with the Marseilles Chamber of Commerce (France), the Agnelli Foundation of Turin (Italy) and the Government of the Balearic Islands (Spain), the Institute is also engaged on a study of the strengths and weaknesses of the "Latin Arc", the countries of the north-west Mediterranean region.

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NEW HORIZONS OF ARAB MUSIC

Isabelle Leymarie talks to

MARCEL KHALIFÉ

■ **What kind of music do you remember hearing as a child?**

Marcel Khalifé: My paternal grandfather, who was a mason, played the *ney*—a reed flute with seven holes—superbly and had a beautiful voice. When I was a child I would climb on his shoulders and shake the tassel of his tarbush to the rhythm of the Lebanese folk songs that he hummed. The soft sounds he produced from his *ney* during family gatherings filled me with joy.

In the streets of the village where I was born, Amchit, near Byblos, gypsies danced and played to the sound of the *bouzouk*, a string instrument, and the *tabla*, a drum. My father and grandfather would invite them home to drink *arak*, and then the fun would begin. My grandfather accompanied them. I always awaited these occasions eagerly and longed to learn their songs.

My uncle gave me a record-player and that opened up all kinds of possibilities for broadening my musical horizons. I listened to Beethoven, Mozart and other classical composers but also to songs by the Egyptian musician Sayed Darwish, and recordings by the Rahbani brothers, who were of Lebanese origin, and many other tunes.

Religious music also had a very strong influence on me. St. Elisha's church echoed to splendid *a capella* monodic chant; that of the Marist brothers to rich polyphonic melodies. I belonged to the choir, which was accompanied by a harmonium. And then, of course, I would hear the vibrant voice of the *muezzin* rise from a nearby mosque.

I have always felt nostalgic for the sounds of my village, and in my compositions I try to rediscover their melodies, which are buried deep within me.

■ **When did you form Al Mayadine?**

M. K.: I had just completed my studies at the National Conservatory of Beirut when the Lebanon war broke out. I wondered whether there was any point in writing music at a time when death was sweeping through the country. However, I was looking for a way of saving myself and others from the horror around us. I registered my protest through music. I got some other musicians together and started Al Mayadine (plural of the Arab word *midan*, the name for the village square where festivities are held). We have performed in the world's most war-torn regions. Our music rose above the cannon's roar, and I'd like to think we were able to bring solace to a few wounded souls. On the world's theatre stages it was also a way of communicating with another language than that of violence.

■ **How do you see the role of the *ud* in Arab music today?**

M. K.: The evolution of Arab music is forcing us to redefine the functions and possibilities of our musical instruments. How can we get them to express themselves in an original, modern fashion? What musical paths should we trace out for our contemporaries and future generations? Why shouldn't we re-examine our methods of writing music and our *ud*-playing techniques? How can we improve the instrument? I am trying to create a family for it comparable to that formed by European string instruments such as the violin, the mandolin or the balalaika. It would, for example, be possible to widen the neck to take as many as twelve strings, which would extend the instrument's possibilities. Could we obtain a more "musical" sound by playing the *ud* with the fingers instead of a plectrum? What new timbres or registers could be produced by changing the size of the body or the soundboard, or by lengthening the neck? We could also create a bass *ud*, with longer and thicker strings like those on a bass guitar, and by getting rid of the double strings. That would make writing music for the *ud* different. I have tried my hand at some of these experiments in my most recent composition, "Jadal"[1], which is an *ud* duet. The two *uds* in the group are tuned differently and their registers are distinct. Since I proposed new ways of using the *ud*, we had to rehearse a lot.

■ **What are you doing at the moment?**

M. K.: Al Mayadine is continuing its international tour, first in London, then in Tunisia and Japan before returning to Beirut. Recordings of three of my compositions, "Elegy for the Orient", "Return Symphony" and "Concerto for *ud* and orchestra" will be appearing soon. The score of "Jadal" is going to be published in Lebanon, as well as an *ud* handbook which will present new forms of writing for *ud* solos, duets, trios and quartets.

■ **'Jadal' contains sophisticated counterpoint and occasional unexpected harmonies. Is that your personal contribution or are similar techniques found in traditional Arab music?**

Arwad Esber © Maison des cultures du monde, Paris

Lebanese-born Marcel Khalifé is one of the greatest living exponents of the ud *(a lute with strings that are plucked) and the architect of a revival of traditional Arab music. His group, Al Mayadine (Marcel Khalifé:* ud, *Charbel Rouhana:* ud, *Ali El Khatib:* riqq, *Abboud El Saadi: bass guitar), is currently on an international tour. Left, Marcel Khalifé in concert (Paris, February 1996).*

M. K.: Harmony and counterpoint have long existed in Arab music. In the fourteenth century the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun described, in the chapter of his *Muqaddima* devoted to music, a musical ensemble consisting of a hundred-odd instruments, including woodwind, brass, plucked or bowed strings, percussion, etc, which played harmonies like a symphony orchestra.

But Arab music, like all other kinds of music, has been exposed to a variety of influences. When I began to study musicology, I applied Western analytical techniques to the different forms of traditional Arab music. I discovered that these forms had already achieved a certain degree of perfection before reaching Europe. Music schools already existed in the ninth century: the composer and singer Ziryab, the head musician at the court of Cordóba, founded the first conservatory of music in Andalusia.

■ **How do today's Arab composers see the future of their music?**

M. K.: One of the questions we are asking is to what extent we are still worthy of our musical heritage. Studying it again may teach us much that would be useful for the future. If our music had continued to make progress, as it did in the past in Andalusia, we would be riding high today. The loss of Andalusia caused a profound break in continuity.

After that there was a long period when nothing moved in the closed world of Arab music. "Jadal" reflects my interest in all kinds of music. I have tried to open up new horizons, but with a familiar landscape as my starting point. I draw inspiration from *maqams* (modes) and traditional Arab rhythms, while moving towards new forms of expression and aesthetic concepts. "Jadal" is a very free composition which ignores the technical restrictions imposed by the *ud*.

■ **Your music sometimes brings to mind Renaissance madrigals and motets. Is that because the guitar is a derivative of the *ud* and that some European traditions spring from the Arab-Andalusian tradition, or is it a deliberate choice on your part?**

M. K.: There has always been an interpenetration between Oriental and Western music. In music, melody, rhythm and musical and cultural traditions in general, it is impossible to put civilizations in a hierarchical order. Composers such as Borodin, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Bartok, Ravel, Saint-Saëns and Debussy dug deep into the folklore of Oriental peoples. The German *lied*, for example, came from the Arab *muashah*—it is an instrumental *muashah*. Even symphonic composition has been influenced by Arab music. At the same time, great Oriental composers such as Aram Khachaturian, who knew the Western tradition as well as their own, contributed to the enrichment of their national culture. Music knows no frontiers.

My life in music has been shaped by a variety of influences and I am receptive to everything beautiful and new that music from anywhere in the world can bring me. But the starting point of my work is an ancient language, that of the Lebanese tradition. I try to strike a balance between two trends that are threatening Arab music: on the one hand extreme conservatism, which rejects all forms of change, and on the other extreme modernism which tries to cut itself off from tradition. My music is generally considered to be classical Arab music, but of a new kind. ■

1. Marcel Khalifé/Al Mayadine
"Jadal—ud duo"
Box of 2 CDs
Nagam Records NR 1009
PO Box 820706
Houston, TX 77282-0706 U.S.A.

ISABELLE LEYMARIE,
a Franco-American musicologist, recently published *Du tango au reggae, Musiques noires d'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes* ("From the Tango to Reggae: Black Music from Latin America and the Caribbean", Flammarion, Paris, 1996).

Looking at life with the eyes of a child

by Henri Matisse

French painter (1869-1954)

Creation is the artist's true function; where there is no creation there is no art. But it would be a mistake to ascribe this creative power to an inborn talent. In art, the genuine creator is not just a gifted being, but a man who has succeeded in arranging, for their appointed end, a complex of activities, of which the work of art is the outcome.

Thus, for the artist creation begins with vision. To see is itself a creative operation, requiring an effort. Everything that we see in our daily life is more or less distorted by acquired habits, and this is perhaps more evident in an age like ours when the cinema posters and magazines present us every day with a flood of ready-made images which are to the eye what prejudices are to the mind.

The effort needed to see things without distortion takes something very like courage: and this courage is essential to the artist, who has to look at everything as though he saw it for the first time: he has to look at life as he did when he was a child and, if he loses that faculty, he cannot express himself in an original, that is, a personal way.

To take an example. Nothing, I think, is more difficult for a true painter than to paint a rose, because before he can do so, he has first to forget all the roses that were ever painted. I have often asked visitors who came to see me at Vence whether they had noticed the thistles by the side of the road. Nobody had seen them; they would all have recognized the leaf of an acanthus on a Corinthian capital, but the memory of the capital prevented them from seeing the thistle in nature. The first step towards creation is to see everything as it really is, and that demands a constant effort. To create is to express what we have within ourselves. Every genuine creative effort comes from within. We have also to nourish our feeling, and we can do so only with materials derived from the world about us. This is the process whereby the artist incorporates and gradually assimilates the external world within himself, until the object of his drawing has become like a part of his being, until he has it within him and can project it on to the canvas as his own creation.

When I paint a portrait, I come back again and again to my sketch and every time it is a new portrait that I am painting: not one that I am improving, but a quite different one that I am beginning over again; and every time I extract from the same person a different being.

In order to make my study more complete, I have often had recourse to photographs of the same person at different ages; the final portrait may show that person younger or under a different aspect from that which he or she presents at the time of sitting, and the reason is that that is the aspect which seemed to me the truest, the one which revealed most of the sitter's real personality.

Thus a work of art is the climax of a long work of preparation. The artist takes from his surroundings everything that can nourish his internal vision, either directly, when the object he is drawing is to appear in his composition, or by analogy. In this way he puts himself into a position where he can create. He enriches himself internally with all the forms he has mastered and which he will one day set to a new rhythm.

It is in the expression of this rhythm that the artist's work becomes really creative. To achieve it, he will have to sift rather than accumulate details, selecting for example, from all possible combinations, the line that expresses most and gives life to the drawing: he will have to seek the equivalent terms by which the facts of nature are transposed into art.

In my "Still Life with Magnolia", I painted a green marble table red: in another place I had to use black to suggest the reflection of the sun on the sea; all these transpositions were not in the least matters of chance or whim, but were the result of a series of investigations, following which these colours seemed to me to be necessary, because of their relation to the rest of the composition, in order to give the impression I wanted. Colours and lines are forces, and the secret of creation lies in the play and balance of those forces.

In the chapel at Vence, which is the outcome of earlier researches of mine, I have tried to achieve that balance of forces; the blues, greens and yellows of the windows compose a light within the chapel which is not strictly any of the colours used, but is the living product of their mutual blending; this light made up of colours is intended to play upon the white and black-stencilled surface of the wall facing the windows, on which the lines are purposely set wide apart. The contrast allows me to give the light its maximum vitalizing value, to make it the essential element, colouring, warming and animating the whole structure, to which it is desired to give an impression of boundless space despite its small dimensions. Throughout the chapel, every line and every detail contributes to that impression.

That is the sense, so it seems to me, in which art may be said to imitate nature, namely, by the life that the creative worker infuses into the work of art. The work will then appear as fertile and as possessed of the same power to thrill, the same resplendent beauty as we find in works of nature.

Great love is needed to achieve this effect, a love capable of inspiring and sustaining that patient striving towards truth, that glowing warmth and that analytic profundity that accompany the birth of any work of art. But is not love the origin of all creation? ■

(Text recorded by Régine Pernoud)

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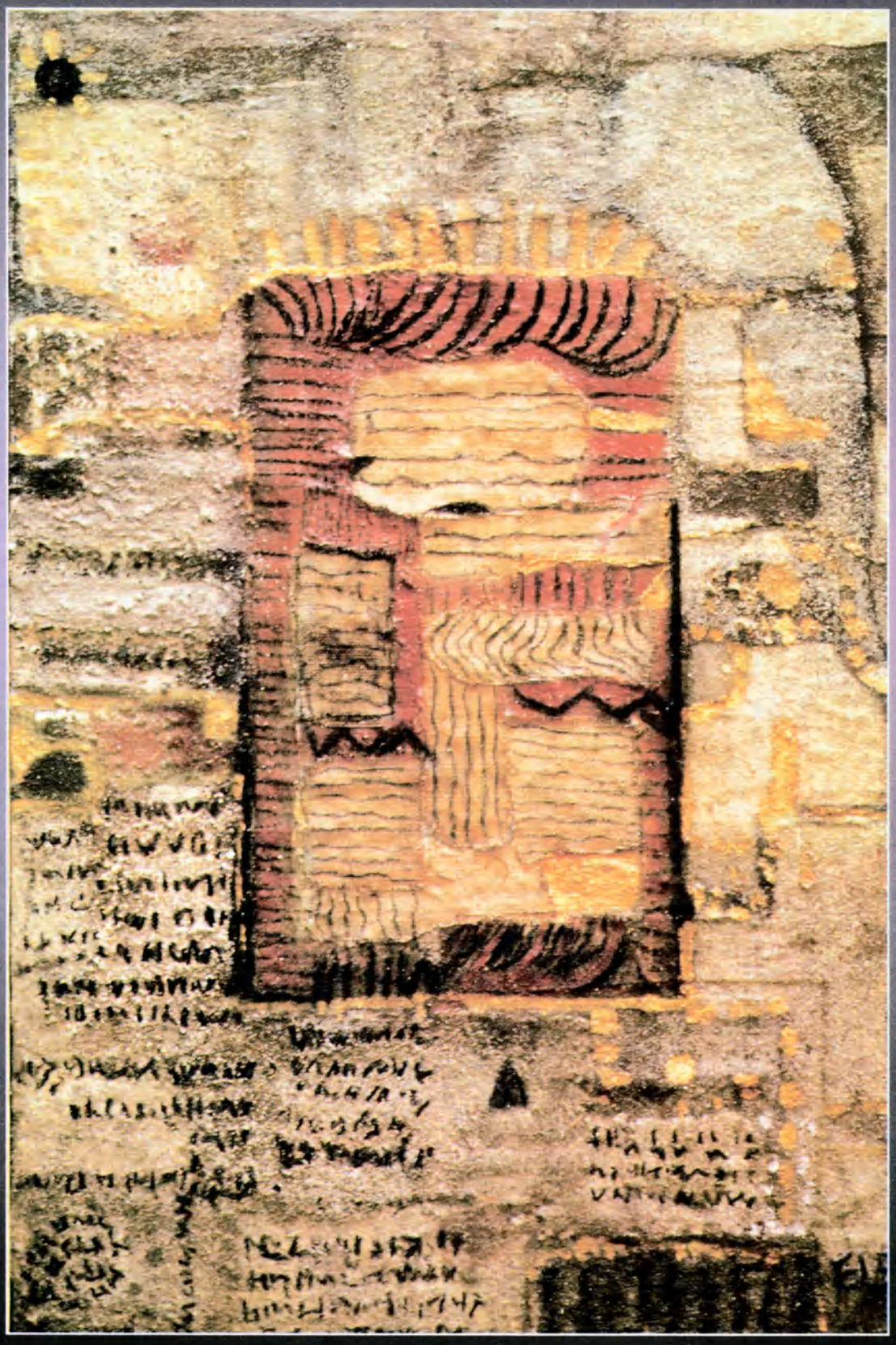
ENCOUNTERS

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.



Window onto the Beyond

1995, mixed media
(130 cm x 90 cm)
by Elyette Lebas

Elyette Lebas is a French artist who has been influenced by North African and Asian cultures. The imaginary lettering she introduces into her paintings is meant to evoke Oriental calligraphy which, she writes, is "inspired by nature and attains the universal, linking humankind with the transcendent."